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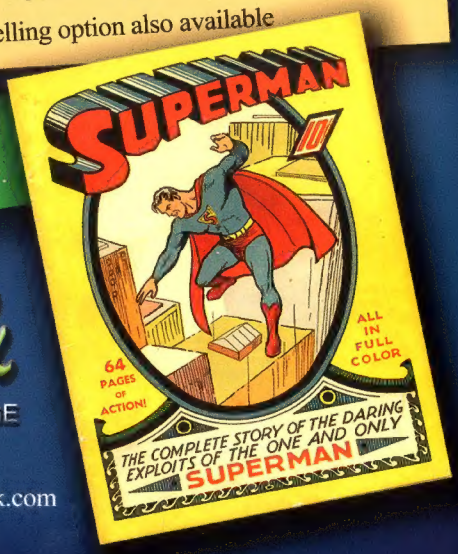

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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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2004

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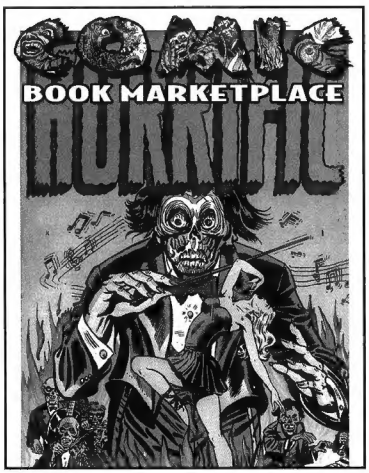

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Letter from the Editor

Way back in 1951, we teenagers of the Fifties may not have listened to our parents when they gave us good advice. After all, being a teenager meant rebelling against authority, at least a little bit, even in the fabulous Fifties!

But when we original EC Fan-Addicts had our noses poked into a tasty morsel from EC, we would read every word. And in the letters pages of those early ECs, Bill and Al would tell us about EC's competitors. This is from the letters page of *Haunt of Fear* #7 (May/Jun 1951):

> *My cauldron and I are both steaming...STEAMING MAD, that is! Some of the inmates of THE HAUNT OF FEAR...while on their nightly ramblings...have run across some pretty sad imitations of various EC comic magazines! Now I don't object to competition! After all, this is a free country! BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANY OF YOU FAITHFUL EC FANS MISLED INTO BELIEVING THAT THESE ARE EC MAGAZINES! An EC magazine carries the EC emblem...your guarantee of the finest in quality and entertainment! (EC stands for ENTERTAINING COMICS!). Any similarity that any other magazines may start to show in titles, title words, characters, or subject matter...IS PURELY INTENTIONAL! The success of EC magazines is known, and other publishers would like to cash in on our hard work! DON'T BE FOOLED! Here is a list of ALL of the EC magazines: THE HAUNT OF FEAR, WEIRD SCIENCE, CRIME SUSPENSTORIES, FRONTLINE COMBAT, TALES FROM THE CRYPT, WEIRD FANTASY, VAULT OF HORROR, TWO-FISTED TALES, and our annual, TALES OF TERROR! THERE ARE NO OTHERS! Each of these mags carries the EC emblem on the cover! Look for it on the cover of THIS magazine! See it? OK!*

And were we tempted to buy those "cheap imitations" from Atlas and those other bad guys who were imitating our precious ECs? Sure, we were! There wasn't enough of a steady supply of new EC stories for our voracious appetites, so we did read that other stuff, but the more we would read, the more we knew that EC was head and shoulders above the competition. In the letters page for *Haunt of Fear* #15 (Sep/Oct 1952), Bill and Al mention the competition by name:

> *Oh, yeah! I would like to warn all of you fans. There has been a magazine on the stands for some time...published by a rival company...called WITCHES TALES. I am not now, have not been in the past, nor expect to be in the future in any way connected with this magazine. This rival organization also publishes CHAMBER OF CHILLS and TOMB OF TERROR. In no way should these magazines be construed as products of EC. They are not...I repeat, NOT...EC magazines!*

And so, dear reader (now I'm starting to sound like Bill and Al!), this issue of *CBM* takes a fond look at all those *other* horror magazines from the early 1950s...the ones Bill and Al warned us about! Enjoy!

Russ Cochran
Editor & Publisher

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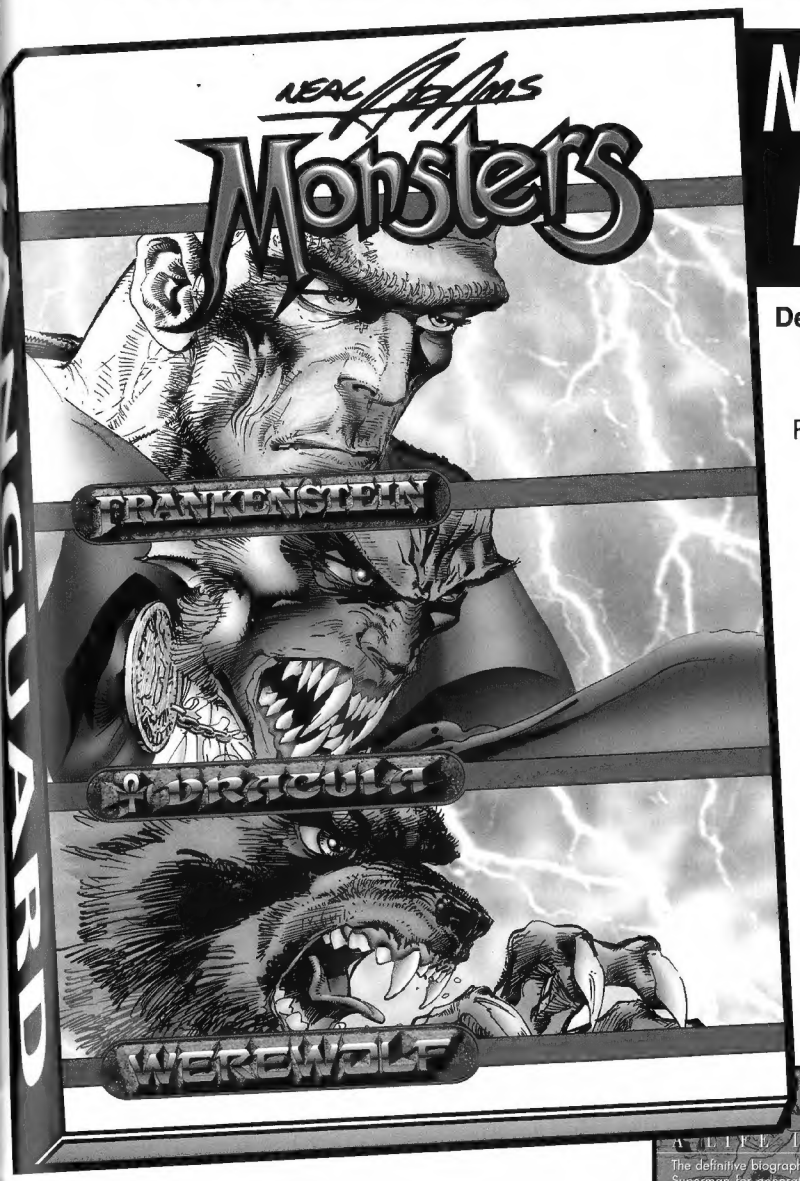

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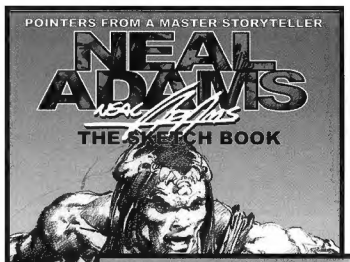

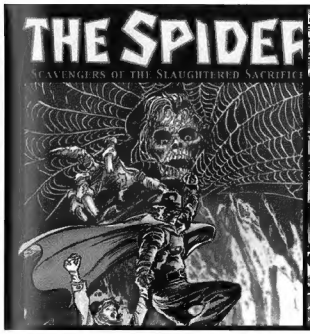

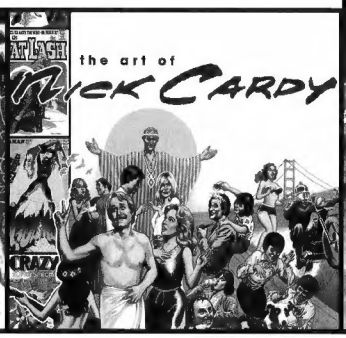

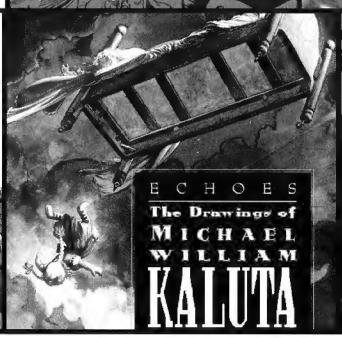

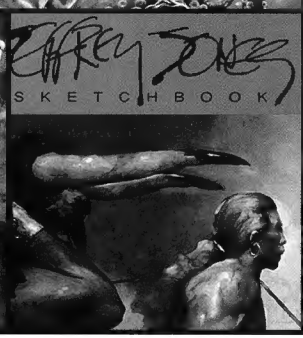

Marketplace Mail

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Marketplace (and Michael)

As a reader of *CBM* since issue #1 I want to weigh in on this possible name change issue.

I realize that very few things stay the same but I feel that changing the name to just "Comics" could have some drawbacks. I have talked to several collectors and have had some tell me that they would not continue to collect *CBM* if the name changed because it would be like starting a new collection with #1 and they just don't want to start a new anything. Also I think doing a name change just to get into Border's etc. could hurt the sales in the local comic shop. For instance, what if the only reason I would buy the newest issue was to read Michelle's column? Instead of buying it I could go to Border's, sit and read her column, put the issue back and you have lost a sale.

Also some people seeing the title "Comics" will think it is a magazine having something to do with comics, i.e., Jay Leno, Rita Rudner, etc. I know that sounds bizarre, but when I was fielding calls for the Chicago Comic Con many moons ago we actually had people call after seeing a local ad for the "Chicago Comic Convention" and ask which comics would be there and how long each would perform.

Even though "MarketWatch" is somewhat small, it is fun to look at and not worry about getting bogged down with too much info. The "Market Reports" are interesting to read because they come from around the country and *CBM* is the only general pub that lets us the common collector see what various dealers think.

I have just one item to bring to everyone's attention. The Superman TV show first began airing on September 26, 1952 in Chicago. That was on a Friday night at 7:30 pm on station WENR.

I wish you would include the addresses on the letters. Thanks,

Ron Massengill
Chicago IL

Thanks for writing, Ron. As I said in last month's editorial, we received so many letters like yours, urging us not *to change the name of* CBM *and* not *to change the Marketplace section, that the decision has been made to leave everything as it is and try our best to improve our content within the current framework. In order to stay in business, though, we need to find either more readers for* CBM *or more advertisers.*

RC

I'd like to start off by thanking you for what you are generally trying to do with *CBM*. That is, I believe, to "round out" the coverage of comic book related collectibles to include strips, platinum and Victorian age comics, toys, original art, pulps, etc. In other words, to give the "average" (more on that later) reader of *CBM* a greater taste for what is out there than was previously covered in *CBM*. Nothing wrong with that so long as the proper perspective and focus is maintained.

Proper perspective and focus is where I think we see things a little bit differently. First, *CBM* readers are not "average" in any sense of the word when talking about comic book collectors. *CBM* readers are a select group, a group which, "on average," is much less receptive to more blatantly commercial comic publications such as the Overstreet/CGC pricing periodical (I am not talking about the annual guide here), *Wizard*, Diamond Comics *Previews*, etc.

Nevertheless, this group is interested in the pricing and market for their cherished collectibles and, in my humble opinion, does maintain an eye to that market, relying heavily (I know you find that hard to believe) on *CBM* for *honest* and *forthright* opinions from Michael Naiman and the "Marketplace Report" contributors. You do not see coverage of this nature in other print venues that I am aware of. The focus, thank goodness, on only CGC books is not found in the *CBM* "Marketplace" reports, and this focus on the broader market is something to be cultivated. CGC books have their place (I have used the service and recommend it for certain books), but a CGC-only focus is self limiting and ultimately detrimental (that is why I find the *CBG* "eye on eBay" to be of relatively limited value).

We desperately need a publication such as *CBM* to maintain and support Michael Naiman's efforts to bring a breath of honesty and zero tolerance for corporate hype to the collecting community. I strongly encourage you to *keep* Michael Naiman's column and the related "Marketplace" reports from advisors. The few pages devoted to this topic would not be better spent elsewhere. In fact, *CBM* would be much poorer without it. Of course, I am not without complete bias as I am an occasional marketplace reporter myself, but all of us have our monetary interests as at least a subtle influence on our perspective. More importantly, I am bringing a much broader personal perspective to this letter, as my monetary interests are small.

While not an old timer by your standards, I have read comics since the mid-1960s, been an active collector since 1977, been one of those often maligned "part time" dealers since 1982, supported the AACC (and *CBM*) since both of their beginnings, been a grading advisor for several Sotheby's comic auctions from 1993-2000, served as president of the AACC, etc. I say this only to let you know that, based on my experience as well the feedback of my collector contacts, you will be making a mistake if you do not keep Michael Naiman's column and related information around and provide him with your full

uncensored support.

Russ, we do not need another publication to gradually turn into a tool of a select few "market making" companies (and I use that term very advisedly). My professional non-comics related experience has given me a lot of perspective on the follies of companies/corporations that gradually get out of touch with their true constituency and, instead, try to promote their desires. Heck, we have seen plenty of that folly here in the comic book world in the last 20 years or so.

I thank you for reading this and would enjoy your reply. Please understand that I do appreciate what you have done in this hobby of ours and I hope you will consider my points with serious reflection. Excelsior,

Bruce W. Edwards
Louisville KY

All your points are good ones, and you are in agreement with virtually all letter-writers, so as much as we wanted to get rid of Michael Naiman, we will grudgingly keep him around for a few more issues. (Just kidding, Michael!)

RC

In our hobby there exists controversy. Two opposing sides. For whatever reason, like it or not, it exists. Grading, slabbing, pricing etc.

It's going to *take a quality magazine like CBM to cover both sides. Let the differences air out and let CBM* be the forum. You can't keep putting the brakes on the hot topics because *someone* might be offended, i.e., an advertiser with *CBM*. Let the games begin! If the entity advertising with *CBM* is worth their salt, they will get their say and may even prevail.

Until *CBM* lets their writers *write* and *inform* regardless, it will just be another foo-foo magazine like the *Wizard*.

Yes, I'm talking about Michael Naiman. He has always had fresh takes and the guts to take on controversy. He also goes through a tremendous amount of data to bring the *real* collector *real life* marketplace values. Where else can you get this? *No where*!

Rick Davidson
Chula Vista CA

Okay, already! Michael stays! And I agree with you that CGC and "slabbing" are here to stay, and that this will remain a controversial issue among collectors. We will continue to look at both sides of the issue. Incidentally, we went to a lot of trouble to get CGC to agree to answer your questions in a new column which we called "Ask CGC." We ran the column only once, and since then we have not received a single question for CGC to answer! If you have questions for CGC, send them to us and we will get them answered.

RC

I've been buying *CBM* since the day I picked up two free copies of #1 at a local store 14 years ago. By and large, the best thing about *CBM* over the years is its tendency to present a balanced look at the industry, buyers and sellers markets, and the history of the comic book medium. We have had many shifts in the market over the last decade with the entry (and exit) of major auction houses in the comics collectible market, as well as the advent of eBay followed closely by CGC.

One of the finest assets to the magazine has been some of its column writers. Michelle Nolan, Pat Calhoun and Michael Naiman are familiar and knowledgeable writers that represent the voices and interests of everyday collectors and buyers who peruse the magazine for information about the medium. I was disappointed when Pat Calhoun no longer maintained his position for *CBM*, but I'm pleased that Naiman and Nolan are such perennials in the mag because their voices are indicative of people who truly love comics—people who are invested far beyond their pocketbooks. I look forward to their reliable voices, and have come to appreciate their expertise and honest observations *every* month. Please be sure to prioritize their continued positions as two of the most talented, provocative, and "tell it like it is" comics columnists in the history of *CBM*. Thanks,

Mick Rabin
La Mesa CA

Okay, okay! Michael, call off your minions! I get the point!

RC

Celardo checklist

Following are some corrections/additions to my John Celardo Checklist published in *CBM* #106.

A) ORIGINAL EDITIONS

Four Color Comics (Dell, 1958) #931 "Have Gun, Will Travel" [inks over Bob Correa], *Turok, Son of Stone* (Dell, 1956) "Turok, Son of Stone" #4, 5 [both inks over Bob Correa].

B) REPRINTS

Delete *I Love You Special* (ACG, 2002) #1 and replace with *Strange Romance* (ACG, 2002) #1.

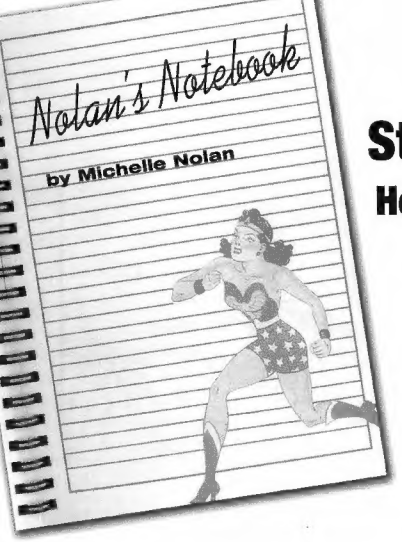
Also, it should be mentioned that Celardo briefly ghosted on the *Buck Rogers* Sunday page for Murphy Anderson in 1958.

Alberto Becattini
Italy

Saunders essence

Thank you so much for the great cover honoring Norman Saunders. If one could get to the essence of 20th century popular art, they would find the art of Mr. Saunders.

Tom Stein
Norwalk CT



Stanmor's Forgotten Fadeout

How a small company left a big mystery

Of the several second-tier but still important companies that abandoned the comics scene in 1956 in the wake of the chaos caused by the appearance of the Comics Code Authority seal one year earlier, by far the least known is Stanmor Publications.

Publisher Stanley P. Morse's enterprising little outfit published comics as Stanmor, Gilmor, Key, Aragon and SPM from 1951-56, and may have been affiliated with other imprints as well. By far the most collectible issues are the little-known firm's pre-Code horror titles along with one of the holy grails for both collectors of romance comics and Steve Ditko—*Daring Love* #1 (Sep/Oct 1953).

Gilmor's *Daring Love* #1—not to be confused with the identically titled 1952-53 series *Daring Love* #15-17 from Ribage—contained Ditko's first published work, along with a highly suggestive cover by a different artist with a "let's-roll-in-the-hay" theme. Even though the last Ribage issue of *Daring Love* was #17 (Apr 1953), for inexplicable reasons Gilmor switched its *Daring Love* title to *Radiant Love* with #2 (Dec 1953). Meanwhile, Ditko never worked for the company again.

Daring Love #1 is one of those books you might have found for a few dollars 20 or 25 years ago—sure wish I had!—yet long since has become ever-so-pricey.

Horror collectors, of course, treasure the outrageous titles *Mister Mystery* #1-19, *Weird Chills* #1-3, *Weird Mysteries* #1-12, and *Weird Tales of the Future* #1-8 of the 1951-54 era, not to mention Morse's scarce black-and-white reprint magazines of the late 1960s and early '70s. The pre-Code Stanmor issues were especially popularized about 15 years ago by the Gerber *Photo-Journal*. They now go for, well, frightfully expensive prices.

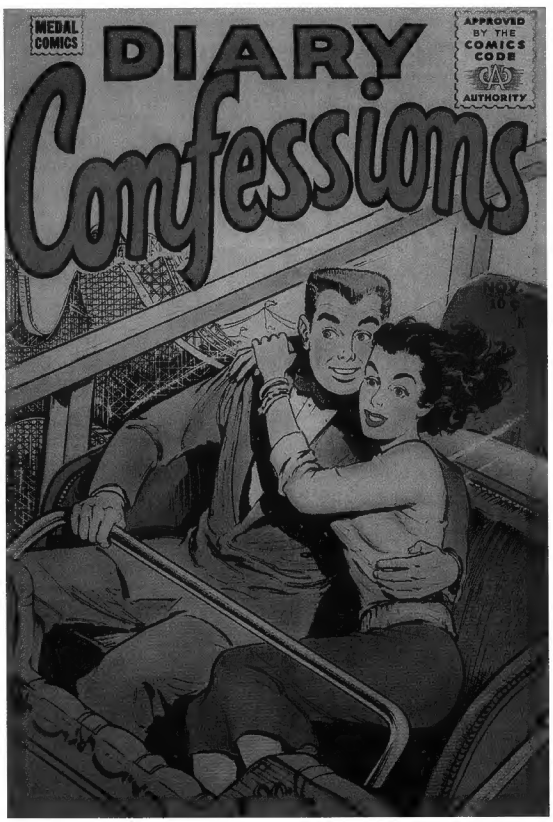
But even though the above titles are by far the most expensive in the Stanmor pantheon, they are not the only collecting challenges. Even if you don't care at all about Stanmor, you might be intrigued by the sheer obscurity of certain 1950s comics. It's a topic that has always fascinated me—the idea that you can be holding in your hands a comic far scarcer than most titles from the 1930s and '40s.

I have been pleasantly surprised by how many collectors have talked with me about the fun of chasing down these obscurities. Just knowing how rare certain comics are makes them fun to find and own, even if their contents otherwise don't warrant much enthusiasm. Dozens of collectors have shared with me the joy of finding an issue they had never seen.

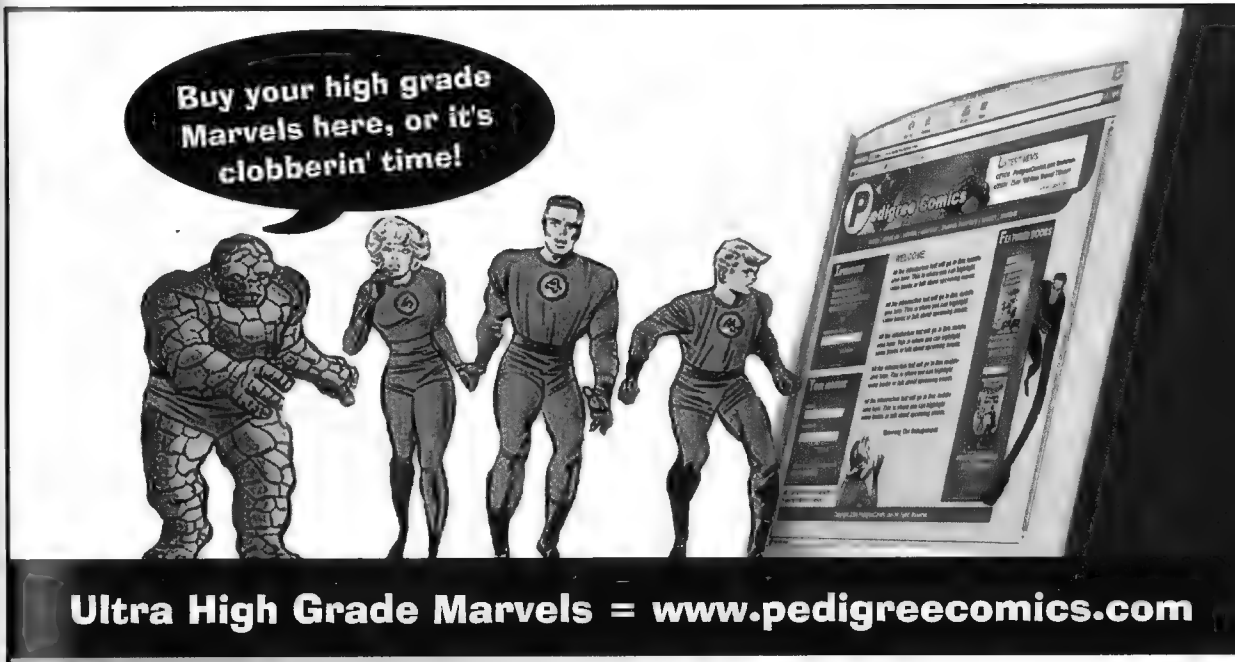
Three of those challenges have the potential to drive at least a few romance and war title collectors nuts, because the questions they pose may never be solved. So let's talk about those frustrations before we explore a few other oddities about Stanmor, including an astonishing case of Comics Code revision.

One of the toughest challenges facing collectors of obscure 1950s romance comics are the two Stanmor love series—*Daring Love* #1/*Radiant Love* #2-6 and *Tender Love* #1-2/*Ideal Love* #3-8/*Diary Confessions* #9-12 and 14.

Wait a minute, you say—where's *Diary Confessions* #13? Shouldn't that be listed? Glad you asked. As I pointed out in the "Nolan's Notebook: Do they exist?" in *CBM* #111, that is the only remaining post-Comics Code romance



Ultra-rare **Diary Confessions** #12 (Nov 1955).



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mystery from the 1950s. (The only remaining pre-Code mysteries are whether Atlas's *Love Tales* #59 and *Love Trails* #2 exist.)

It's a great question—where, indeed, is *Diary Confessions* #13? The query was brought home to me again when I finally received *Diary Confessions* #12 (Nov 1955) shortly after my birthday February 1. Dan Stevenson found an affordable copy for me in the Neat Stuff Collectibles auction of that company's heralded "Mama's Collection" treasure trove of romance comics. Many were obscure beauties.

I'm very grateful to Dan—I had been looking for *Diary Confessions* #12 for more than 20 years! In fact, the only other copy I have ever seen or heard of was already safely locked into Dan's near-complete collection of all romance comics. There are any number of uncommon romance comics, but *Diary Confessions* #12 is surely one of the rarest.

So is *Diary Confessions* #13—if it exists. I'll bet it does not. Longtime readers may recall how I once postulated that if there is any published newsstand comic book of which no copy survives, it could be *Diary Confessions* #13. I doubt if that's the case, however. My guess is that Stanmor's funny book fadeout in 1956 prevented this issue from being published.

Before I explain why, I should explain that strange as it seems, Stanmor was actually a fairly significant newsstand comic book publisher in 1955. In fact, the little company published 56 comics in 1955, twice as many as its 27 issues in 1954. In 1955, Stanmor released slightly more comics than the much-better-known EC, Ace, Ajax, Prize and Magazine Enterprises.

What's really fascinating about Stanmor is that it was essentially the quintessential generic comic book company, because Stanmor rarely published continuing characters. There were a few—the *Silver Kid Western* was the best known, running a whopping five issues in 1954-55 as a blatant Lone Ranger knockoff. But Stanmor's policy was unusual in 1955, when anthologies were on the decline and almost all the best-selling comics featured regular characters.

Another oddity: Stanmor's titles apparently did not receive anywhere near as much national circulation as most firms. I can't ever remember seeing a second-hand Stanmor comic despite looking through untold thousands of back issues on the west coast in my first decade of collecting from 1956-66.

Stanmor produced a whopping 18 titles in 1955 but only four titles continued into 1956—*Diary Confessions* #14 (and possibly #13, which would be Feb 1956), *Battle Fire* #6 (and possibly #5 and #7), *Flying Aces* #5 (and possibly #4) and *Navy Task Force* #8.

Battle Fire #4 is dated Oct 1955 and #6 is dated May 1956, but I've never seen evidence of either a #5 (which would be dated Jan or Feb) or a #7 (which would have been published later than any other issue from Stanmor). Likewise, *Flying Aces* #3 is dated Nov 1955 and #5 is dated Mar 1956, but #4 seems to be non-existent.

Meanwhile, *Navy Task Force* did not skip an issue, but did go from #7 (Dec 1955) to #8 (Apr 1956). *Navy Task Force* #8, by the by, was an exact reprint of Stanmor's *Navy Patrol* #1 (May 1955) except for the advertisements.

My guess is that Stanmor suffered a financial blip and thus did not publish any comics dated in the January through March period of 1956. Yet perhaps the work was done—including the numbering of the missing issues—but these comics were never actually published.

I checked with longtime collectors Dan Stevenson and Gary Watson, both of whom have well over 100,000 comics in their collections with a heavy emphasis on titles from the 1950s. Neither has ever seen *Battle Fire* #5 or #7, *Flying Aces* #4 and *Diary Secrets* #13. Neither have several other collectors I checked with.

YOU WHO HAVE GOOD LOOKS, DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT A GIRL LIKE ME GOES THROUGH! NO DATES... NO EXCITEMENT... LAUGHED AT, RIDICULED BEHIND MY BACK... ALONE! YES, THAT'S WHAT I HAD TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN LIFE... FOR I WAS
UGLY
SAY JIMMY, SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE A DATE FOR THE DANCE TONIGHT, WHY DON'T YOU ASK BELINDA SAUER TO GO WITH YOU?
THAT BEAST! I'D RATHER GO STAG THAN BE SEEN WITH HER!
SOB SOB
SOB SOB
WHEN YOU'RE VERY YOUNG IT DOESN'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE, IT'S ONLY WHEN YOU'RE IN HIGH SCHOOL THAT YOU FIRST FEEL IT... THAT'S WHEN THE LONELINESS BEGINS TO SET IN WHEN YOU'D GIVE EVERYTHING TO CHANGE YOUR LOOKS! AND THAT'S HOW MY YOUTH WAS SPENT. ALONE... UNWANTED... LONGING!
THAT WAS WHY I DIDN'T GO AWAY TO COLLEGE, BUT WENT TO THE SCHOOL OF TODAY! AND OH, HOW I THREW MYSELF INTO MY STUDIES... AT LEAST I COULD COMPENSATE FOR MY SHORT COMINGS BY BEING THE BEST STUDENT IN CLASS!
MUST YOU ALWAYS STUDY, BELINDA! YOU'RE NEVER AWAY FROM THOSE BOOKS! AND WHY AREN'T YOU GOING TO THE GET ACQUAINTED DANCE TONIGHT? I HEAR THE WHOLE SCHOOL WILL BE THERE!
I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR A STUPID DANCE BESIDES, I HAVE TO HAVE THIS REPORT IN FOR TOMORROW IT MEANS AN EXTRA CREDIT IN MY PSYCH COURSE!
MOTHER MEANT WELL, BUT SHE JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND...
SOB SOB OH, OF COURSE I WANT TO GO SOB BUT WHO WANTS TO BE A WALLFLOWER WHO WANTS TO JUST STAND AROUND SOB SOB

Pre-Code **Tender Romance** #2 (Feb 1954). Compare with "Skin Deep" reprint copy.

"None of those four books seem to exist," says Watson, who tirelessly trolls endless websites and digs through untold numbers of boxes in search of comics that have eluded him since he began collecting more than 40 years ago.

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Another hint that *Diary Confessions* #13 may not exist: In the indicia to #14, it says "formerly *Ideal Romance*," repeating information listed in the indicia to *Diary Confessions* #9 following the title change from *Ideal Romance* #8. Yet the indicia to *Diary Confessions* #10, 11 and 12 do not make any reference to the title change, nor would they have been expected to.

There's also an intriguing and confusing statement of ownership in *Diary Confessions* #9. The title is listed as *Diary Confessions*, but the statement listing the former title of a comic—Charlton did that often—but I had never seen a statement issued with the future title until I saw *Diary Confessions* #9.

Almost all the Stanmor titles were published under the Key imprint in the indicia (with no logo on the cover) beginning late in 1955. Early in 1955, the firm's address in New York City changed from 175 Fifth Avenue to 261 Fifth Avenue, just across the street one block up.

SKIN DEEP!
SAY JIMMY, SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE A DATE FOR THE DANCE TONIGHT, WHY DON'T YOU ASK BELINDA SAUER TO GO WITH YOU?
I'D RATHER GO STAG THAN BE SEEN WITH HER!
SOB SOB
MUST YOU ALWAYS STUDY, BELINDA YOU'LL NEVER AWAY FROM THOSE BOOKS! AND WHY ARE YOU GOING TO THE GET ACQUAINTED DANCE TONIGHT? I HEAR THIS WHOLE SCHOOL WILL BE THERE!
I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR A STUPID DANCE BESIDES, I HAVE TO HAVE THIS REPORT IN FOR TOMORROW IT MEANS AN EXTRA CREDIT IN MY PSYCH COURSE
SOB SOB OH, OF COURSE I WANT TO GO SOB BUT WHO WANTS TO BE A WALLFLOWER WHO WANTS TO JUST STAND AROUND SOB SOB
ALONE UNWANTED LONGING!

Post-Code **Diary Confessions** #12 (Nov 1955).

Stanmor comics occasionally ran reprints—in fact, *Diary Confessions* #10 bannered "All Stories Brand New" even though the tale of "Rich Man's Daughter" was a reprint from *Tender Romance* #1 (Dec 1953).

Now for something really different. In that wonderfully obscure treasure I recently received—*Diary Confessions* #12 (Nov 1955)—there's a fascinating study in Comics Code Authority reprint mandates. There's a story entitled "Skin Deep!"—a quirky five-page human-interest epic about how a homely girl and a blind man fall in love. It's the type of tale that editor Richard Hughes wrote so endearingly in endless variations on this theme for his American Comics Group.

This "Skin Deep" story, however, was reprinted from Stanmor's pre-Code issue of *Tender Romance* #2 (Feb 1954), when the tale was entitled "Ugly" in one-inch letters! "Ugly" was signed by Sal Trapani. That alone was unusual—most Stanmor stories were not signed. Yet in the "Skin Deep" reprint, the box with Trapani's signature was removed.

The splash panel of "Ugly" shows homely Belinda Sauer sobbing on the school steps because she overhears one varsity letterman telling another, "That beast! I'd rather go stag than be seen with her!" In the reprint version, the two words "That beast!" have been eliminated.

There is no other change in either lettering or art until after Belinda has met a blind soldier named Ken and they inevitably kiss on the fourth page. Then we see how the Comics Code worked. This part of a sentence was eliminated in the cutline above the panel in which they first kiss: "...and the fires of passion were consuming my very being!"

Heaven help us if teen girls were to be "consumed" by reading about "the fires of passion"!! By the way, Ken is predictably cured of his blindness in the final panels, but that doesn't prevent him from loving Belinda for who she really is.

About this same time, Stanmor published one of the oddest one-shots of the 1950s. Of the 18 titles Stanmor published in 1955, the only one-shot was *Pete the Panic*. This curious title was among the many knockoffs of *Dennis the*

is dated October 1, 1954—surely well before *Ideal Romance* #8 hit the stands with its Feb 1955 date, and long before the title change to *Diary Confessions* with #9 (May 1955).

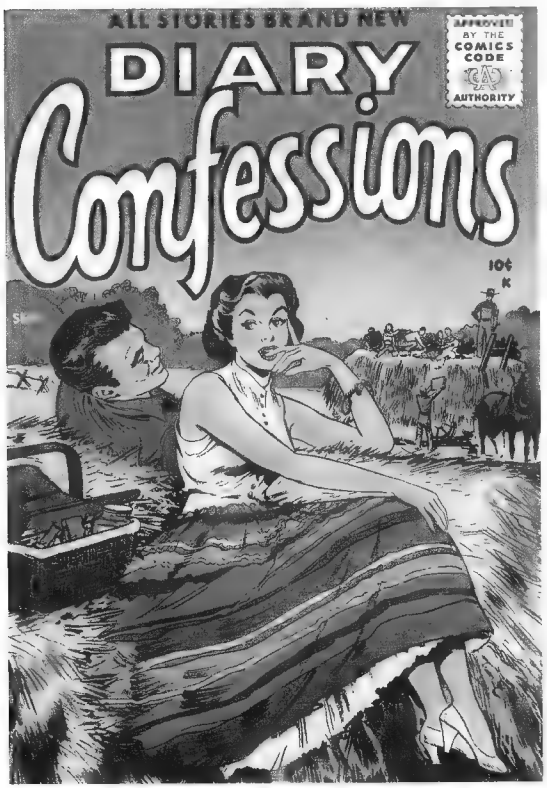
I have seen statements of ownership

Menace, although it much more strongly resembles Archie's *Pat the Brat*. By the way, Stanmor's *Real Adventure* #1 became the ultimate generic title, *Action Adventure* #2-4, but it was still the same comic.

Pete the Panic is fairly uncommon. I've seen only a few copies, although it's pictured in the *Photo-Journal*. What makes *Pete the Panic* unusual is that it has a cover date (Nov) and a Comics Code symbol, making it apparently a 1955 issue, yet *Pete the Panic* has neither an issue date nor a copyright date in the indicia. The reason this seems to be a 1955 issue instead of a last-gasp 1956 attempt is this: *Pete the Panic* has ten full pages of advertising, including the covers, along with two text pages—just like a typical 1955 Stanmor title.

Pete the Panic is apparently the work of the same competent person and contains everything from a single three-page story to several one-pagers, half-pagers and panel gags. Whoever produced this actually did a good job. It's funnier than many similar titles, but to the best of my knowledge, *Pete the Panic* never appeared anywhere again. Does anyone know anything else about this character or creator?

Stanmor's other titles in 1955 could not have been much more generic: *Action Adventure*, *Battle Attack*, *Battle Cry*, *Battle Fire*, *Battle Squadron*, *Climax!*, *Flying Aces*, *Mutiny*, *Navy Patrol*, *Navy Task Force*, *Prize Mystery*, *Real Adventure*, *Silver Kid Western*, *Warpath* and *Western Rough Riders*.



Rare **Diary Confessions** #11 (Sep 1955).

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Considering the Comics Code's objections to "the fires of passion," it seems nothing short of amazing that the Code allowed *Climax!* as a title. But then, *Climax!* suffered from premature elimination: the title lasted only two issues.

In addition to Stanmor, several publishers went out of business with their final comics dated 1956: Quality, Ace, Argo, Lev Gleason, Avon, Superior, Eastern and EC (which was, of course, second-tier only in the sense of number of titles published). Quality was the only major publisher of the group; none of the rest produced more than 30 newsstand comics that year.

The difference is that there are no questions remaining about those companies. When it comes to Stanmor, though, its mysteries may never be solved.

COMIC STRIP ART IS HOT!

If you have followed the results of several recent auctions or original comic art, then you know about the Peanuts Sunday that recently sold for over $70,000, a Foster Tarzan that sold for over $20,000, and many other record-setting prices.

Russ Cochran has been auctioning original comic art since 1973. Russ Cochran's Comic Art Auction, now in its 68th issue, has offered the very best in comic strip art as well as comic book art like all the EC New Trend art.

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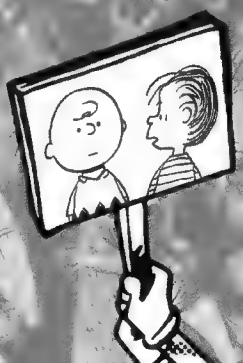


by Pat Calhoun

Mummy's The Word

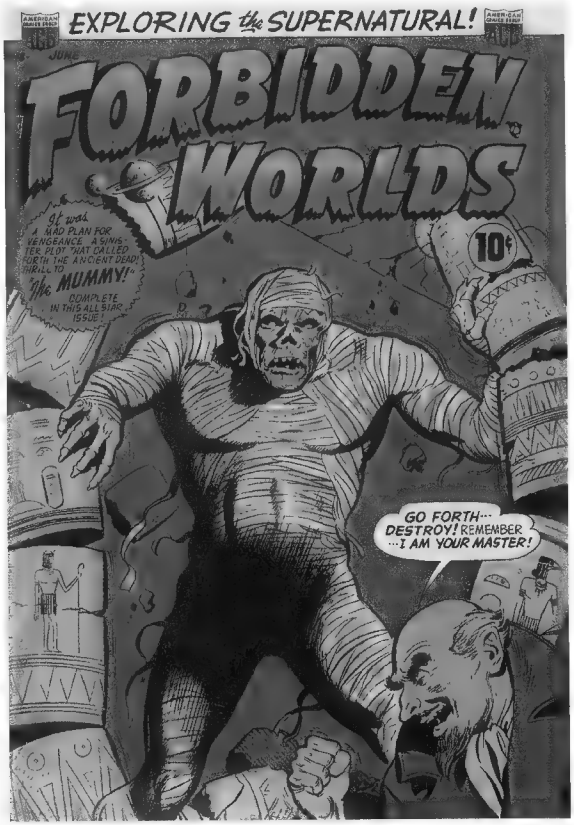
Since comic book collecting is often about the preservation of antiques, this month's theme will be especially apropos: covers and stories featuring the results of ancient techniques that allowed human bodies to endure for thousands of years as mummies. Mummies have been a staple of supernatural literature since the nineteenth century when French writers Theophile Gautier and Guy de Maupassant used them as characters in classic short stories. Certainly the 1932 Universal horror film *The Mummy*, starring Boris Karloff, popularized the concept of a cloth-wrapped chemically-treated corpse coming back to life after thousands of years. When fantasy comics began to proliferate in the early 1950s these readily recognizable "wrap stars" rose up from the dead again and again to become key players in that fondly-remembered era of four-color monsters and mayhem.

The cover of *Forbidden Worlds* #18 (Jun 1953) epitomizes the "mummy as menace" theme. The story inside has a museum curator—fired for his crackpot occult theories—stealing a mummy and reviving it to kill those who called him crazy. It's a typical ACG yarn with the mummy vanquished by the same ancient magic that brought it back to life, but intense art by Harry Lazarus makes it worthwhile.

"The Devil and Tommy Trent" is fairly well-done hokum. Take two childhood pals, grow one up into a judge and the other into a crook, and you have the old pot boiling. Next up is "The Buried Curse" about a deadly disease that feeds on the psychic energy of its victims. Will the charming young couple escape the soul-sucking horror? It's a solid story. "Vampire of the Deep" makes a good finale. It's basically another "young couple versus old supernatural evil" plot, but done to a turn with lurid art rendering a genuinely grisly sea-devil.

Frankenstein #27 (Oct/Nov 1953) gives us four mummies—although the one that Frank is rescuing hasn't been embalmed yet—on the charming cover by Dick Briefer. The story inside that leads up to this climactic scene is called "Frozen Alive" and starts with the immobilized monster on a world tour trapped in a block of ice. But the plane the show travels in crashes in the desert. Eventually the generator that keeps Frankie frozen stops running, and after a couple of twists only one of the four crash survivors (and the monster) is left alive. She hides in an old tomb and gets captured by a bunch of mummies—presumptively revived by her entrance into the tomb. This curves the story from its start of realistic suspense to a more standard monster versus monsters as Frankenstein shows up to rescue her, but the two parts add up to a wild ride.

The backup stories this issue are both entertaining: one about a murdering botanist who uses human blood to make his roses grow big and red, and one about a plane crash in the Himalayas where, miraculously, all hands survive. When they find Shangri-La in the next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10¢
IT WAS A MAD PLAN FOR VENGEANCE A SINISTER PLOT THAT CALLED FORTH THE ANCIENT DEAD! THRILL TO 'The MUMMY!' COMPLETE IN THIS ALL STAR ISSUE!
GO FORTH··· DESTROY! REMEMBER ···I AM YOUR MASTER!

Forbidden Worlds #18 (Jun 1953). "It was a mad plan for vengeance—a sinister plot that called forth the ancient dead! Thrill to 'The Mummy!' complete in this all star issue!"

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OVERSTREET'S COMIC PRICE REVIEW • MONTHLY FROM GEMSTONE PUBLISHING

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HIS BOND WAS WITH THE ANCIENTS, AND FROM THE MOULDY CENTURIES OF FORGOTTEN TIME HE DREW FORTH AN EVIL OF UNPARALLELED TERROR! THE TIME FOR REVENGE HAD COME···AND YET THERE REMAINED ONE FACTOR TO BE DEALT WITH···
The MUMMY!
DESTROY ···KILL!! I AM YOUR MASTER AND YOU MUST OBEY!

As this splash for "The Mummy" (**Forbidden Worlds** #18) shows, either Harry Lazarus used Ken Bald's cover characters as models or vice versa. Either way, both are awesome renditions of the horror classic.

valley, the captain suspects a trap.

The Frankenstein story, by the way, is a reprise of a Briefer story about mummies from #3 back in 1946 when the mag was a humor title, and after praising the "horror" version it must be said that the original is brilliantly hilarious, one of the highlights on the "funny" run.

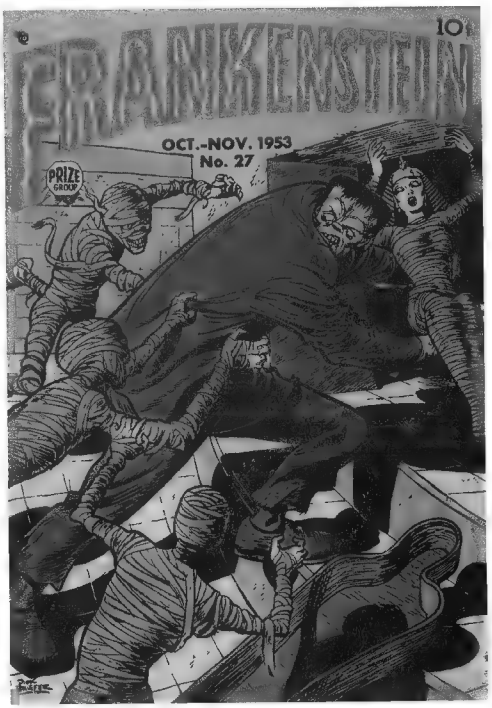
Even though it's the oldest of the three books, *Blackhawk* #53 (Jun 1952) was saved for last due to the bizarre lead story, "The Golden Mummy," that is an eerie forecast of current events. In a "middle-eastern" country two white archaeologists are exploring a tomb when they are attacked by a band of natives. By happy chance the Blackhawks are flying by, and they land and drive the natives away. Later, a giant golden mummy taken from the tomb becomes animated and starts to rally the locals into a "jehad" against the infidels.

The Hawks find that the mummy is tough—bulletproof and super strong. Only when Blackhawk hurls a hi-tech thermite bomb does it topple—and burning reveals itself to be a robot. Blackhawk also proves that the golden gadget was controlled by the archaeologists to stir up trouble for their own purposes. Anyone who doesn't think there's some relevance here to today's Mideast situation hasn't read any news since 1952!

Blackhawk always was a political strip. They started with the Hawk as a Polish freedom fighter in #1 of Quality's *Military Comics* in 1941. And their planes took them all over the world. Quality published another interesting globetrotter, T-Man, and this Blackhawk ish has a full page house ad for *T-Man* #6 where Pete Trask tangles with "The Man Who Could Be Hitler." It's also worth noting that when Quality ran house ads in their other titles for *Blackhawk* (which was often) they billed it as a million-seller—easy enough to believe since there'd recently been a Republic serial of Blackhawk starring Kirk Alyn (who also played Superman) in one of those episodic extravaganzas full of cardboard characters, cliffhangers and cheesy effects. And, yes, this author is old enough to remember the days of twenty-five cent Saturday matinees at the Village Theater when the feature film would be preceded by previews, a couple of cartoons, and fifteen fantastic minutes of Captain Marvel, or Captain America, or even Blackhawk!

The second Hawk yarn, "Disaster Island," has pirates rig up a submarine so that it looks like a little island when it surfaces in front of ships that it raids and plunders after the vessels get stuck on this "sudden shore." It's predictable but pleasant.

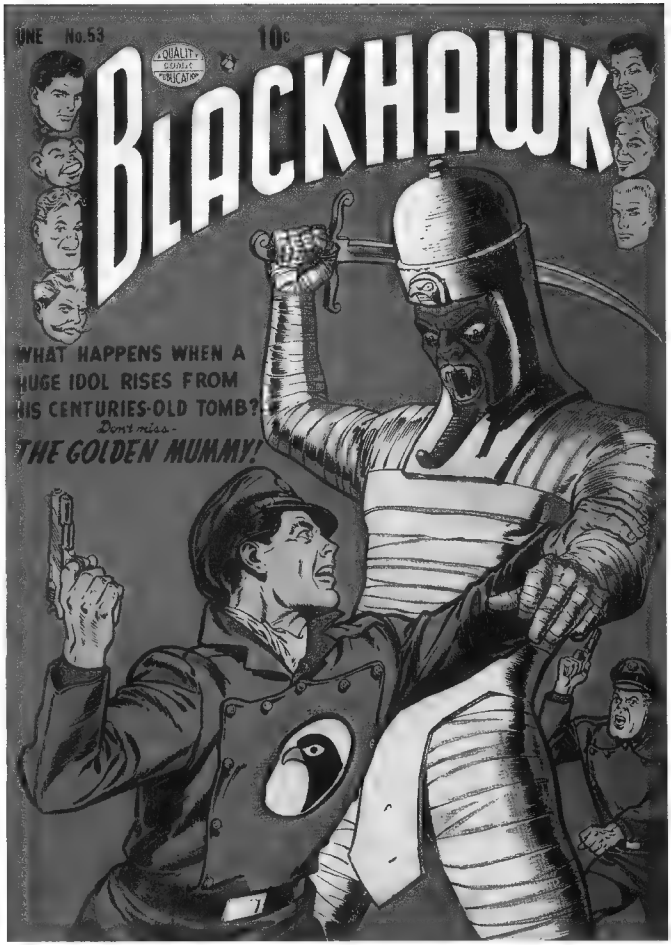
"Death's Comet" ends the issue with a bang. This story features a mad scientist, Dr. Moorhead, who escapes from prison (using a mini-bomb he made from the cello wrapper on a pack of playing cards) on the day he was to go to the electric chair for an attempted sale of H-bomb secrets. The scientist then sends a message from his hideout that he will destroy the planet unless the "World Council" turns authority over to him. (Blackhawk took place in an alternate reality; the mummy story mentioned that the archaeologist "agents" would be tried



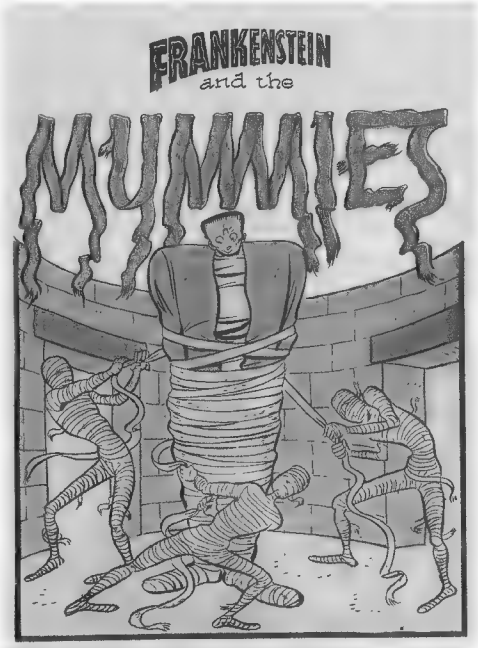
Frankenstein #27. (Oct/Nov 1953) Briefer's colorful cover—free of blurbs and balloons—captures the dry dusty rustling creepiness of these depraved tomb-dwellers.

IS HITLER ALIVE?
T-MAN
HERE IS A POWERFUL STORY OUT OF THE CATACOMBS OF THE PYRAMIDS!
PETE TRASK, AMERICAN TREASURY AGENT MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY DEEP IN THE HIDDEN RECESSES OF AN OLD EGYPTIAN TOMB!
DON'T MISS THIS AMAZING ADVENTURE!
SEE HOW T-MAN FERRETS OUT THE MOST FANATICAL TYRANT OF THEM ALL...
Read "THE MAN WHO COULD BE HITLER!"
JULY ISSUE OF T-MAN ON SALE APRIL 4th

This house ad for **T-Man** #6 (from **Blackhawk** #53) isn't a mummy cover, but it's a sarcophagus cover and that's close! Treasury agent Pete Trask "ferrets out the most fanatical tyrant of them all!"



Blackhawk #53 (Jun 1952). During the boom years of 1952 through 1954 horror was so popular that many hero titles used eerie elements to boost sales.



Here's a glimpse of the "funny" Frankenstein, whose "Frankenstein and the Mummies" in #3 (Jul/Aug 1946) is a humor classic, just as #27's "Frozen Alive" mummy reprise is an outstanding horror yarn.

in the "World Court.") Moorhead just about makes good as he lures a comet towards Earth; the Hawks barely get their jets in the sky before a tidal wave sweeps Blackhawk Island as the approaching comet looms like a second moon causing floods and earthquakes. The Hawks must find and destroy the Doctor's gravity beam machine before it's too late!

Well, that about "wraps" things up, from embalming to bombing! It's always exciting to explore the "boom" years '52 through '54, when they sold more comics than ever before—or since!

Gemstone Marks Anniversary with Gift to Overstreet Readers

The 34th edition of *The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, released to stores April 21, marks the tenth year the industry bible has been published by Gemstone Publishing, and with that in mind Gemstone is giving its loyal retailers, readers and collectors a gift: complimentary copies of *Overstreet's Comic Price Review #8*.

Overstreet's Comic Price Review is the monthly price guide newsletter for certified comics in the 9.0 to 10.0 range, concentrating particularly on issues in the highly unpredictable arena of 9.4 and up.

In addition to any quantities of *Overstreet's Comic Price Review #8* they regularly ordered, each retailer received free copies in equal numbers to their orders for all editions of *The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #34* so that they can share this gift with their customers, particularly those who have reserved copies of the *Guide* ahead of time.

"We've been very pleased with the reactions to *Overstreet's Comic Price Review* in the past few months," said Steve Geppi, President and Chief Executive Officer of Gemstone Publishing. "It's been obvious to our readers that we've been reflecting the changes in the marketplace and listening to the feedback as we grew the publication. The 10th anniversary of Gemstone publishing the *Guide* seemed like a great time for us to say 'thank-you' to everyone with this bonus copy."

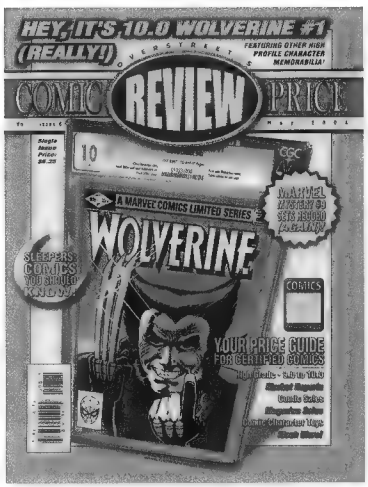
The annual *Guide* will still feature six pricing columns, 2.0, 4.0, 6.0, 8.0, 9.0 and 9.2, but the *Price Review* will be the only source of prices for spotlighted issues in 9.4 or higher.

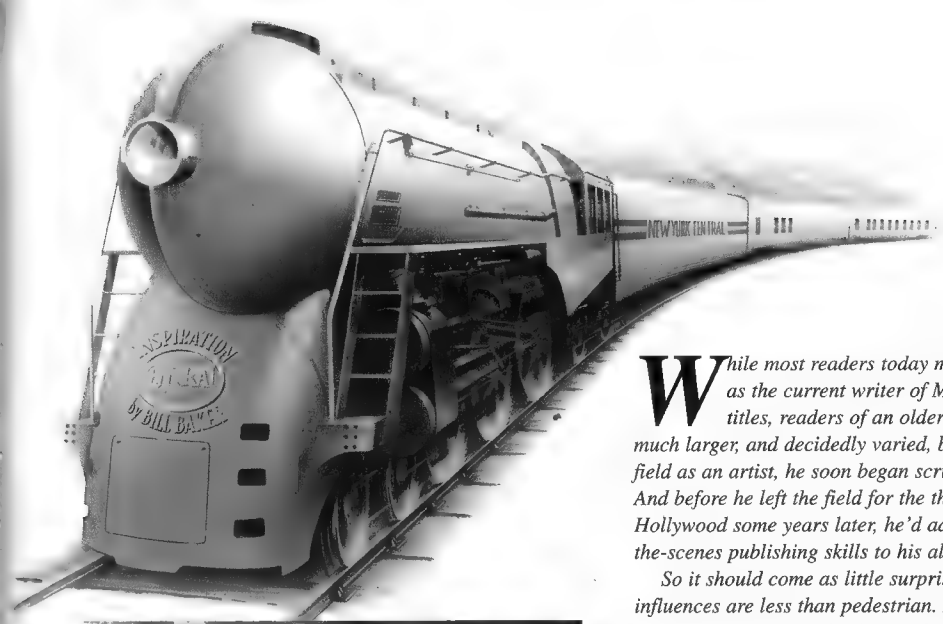
"The market for high-grade certified comics has been incredibly volatile," said Robert M. Overstreet, author and publisher of *The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. "In many instances it has gone well beyond what can be accurately reflected in an annual. That's why we made the decision to make the top end of the *Guide* 9.2 rather than 9.4, and why 9.4 and up will be featured in our monthly, *Overstreet's Comic Price Review*."

Each monthly issue of *Overstreet's Comic Price Review* contains articles and analysis on the current marketplace, market reports from Overstreet Advisors, sales lists of certified comics and magazines, and Ten To Watch (noteworthy comics from history and the present). Each issue also features other high profile comic character memorabilia as well.

The special complimentary issue of *OCPR* includes reports of a record-breaking sale of *Marvel Mystery* #9, a look at five "sleepers" you should know about, market reports from some of the top retailers in the world of comics, a detailed list of prices realized from 10.0 all the way down to 0.5, a bonus color gallery section, a checklist of Marvel's 30¢ and 35¢ variants, a First Comics collector's checklist, Overstreet pricing on such titles as *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Batman*, *Captain America*, *Conan*, *Daredevil*, *Fables*, *Iron Man*, *Justice League of America*, *Superman/Batman*, *Teen Titans*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, and many others. Also detailed in this issue are prices for Randy Bowen's Marvel statues, character watches, and superhero/adventure club kits.

"It's hard to believe that Bob Overstreet has put out 34 editions of the *Guide*," Geppi said, "and it almost seems impossible that it's been ten editions since he brought the book to Gemstone. I'm glad we can give our readers, who have been incredibly loyal, this small token of our thanks."



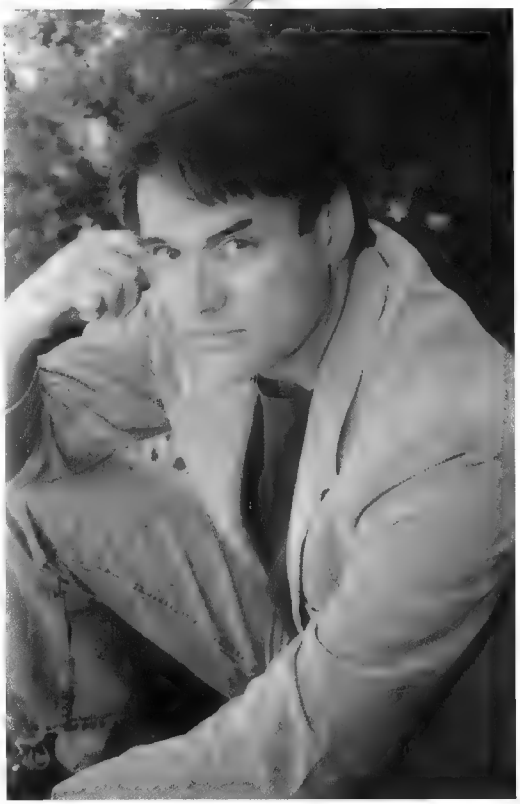


While most readers today might only think of Bruce Jones as the current writer of Marvel's The Hulk *and other titles, readers of an older generation know him for a much larger, and decidedly varied, body of work. After entering the field as an artist, he soon began scripting comics with good results. And before he left the field for the then greener pastures of Hollywood some years later, he'd added editing and other behind-the-scenes publishing skills to his already impressive resume.*

So it should come as little surprise that Jones' tastes and influences are less than pedestrian. In fact, when considering this multifarious creator's background, it could easily be said,

I Sing the Body Eclectic!

Bruce Jones on his influences, both high and low



conducted by Bill Baker

CBM: When and how did you discover comics, and what about them caught and held your attention?

Bruce Jones: I discovered comics as a kid, partly because they were more prevalent in my youth in terms of logistics but mostly, I suspect, for the same reason all kids eventually find them: the electric colors and graphics of the covers. I was probably in a dime store or drugstore or something; they were everywhere, you couldn't not stumble over them. I'd add that I was visually oriented as a child, except that I was prose oriented as well—which made me this kind of weird hybrid dweeb, I guess. I think the right side of my brain was left-handed or something.

CBM: Were there any specific titles or characters that you particularly enjoyed, and what about them intrigued you?

Jones: I loved the pre-Code horror comics, though I was really too young for their heyday. They terrified and thrilled me and made me doubt God. I still walk in dread of them; that terrific screw-you nihilist attitude that's provocative to this day, even with the crude ones. Horror for its own sake—truly depraved. I mean when was the last time something was popular because it glorified its own offensiveness? It was the pornography of its day, only far more insidious because some of it was quite good—a product of World War II guilt and post-war paranoia and an important era in our nation's history still not properly assessed. Pundits always wax on about the literacy of the ECs, but those Atlas covers were genuinely demented, pure free-base psychosis, maybe even a kind of lost art. You can't fake or recreate that. It was the unique mood of the times. And it wasn't Dr. Wertham or Communism or fear for the

children that killed horror comics, it was our parents' fear of what they might themselves be capable of—and a child's ready certainty they were. Where's the line between a spanking and a thrashing?

But I digress. Really, I read everything. If it were within reach I would read it. Even the phone book. I think it's some kind of obsessive-compulsive thing, a mild neurological disorder. When the kitchen is burning down and you're too busy reading the milk carton to notice, this is a clear warning sign. I think I heard somewhere that Hugh Downs suffers from compulsive reading. It's a mixed blessing. I've always been a walking vocabulary of useless information.

CBM: Were there any comic writers or artists who really captivated you?

Jones: Yes, too many to list here. But the thing is it's constantly changing as you age. If you mean the formative years, then it was fantasy writers like Richard Matheson and Ray Bradbury, but I rarely read those guys now. You know, you move from, say, someone like Charles Beaumont to Shirley Jackson, from Jackson to Norman Mailer, Mailer to John Updike, then on from there to these splinter groups who nobody ever heard of like John Buell or Hank Searls or Mitchell Smith. It's usually substance over style in your youth, then vice-versa, though not always. Matheson was a fine stylist, he just didn't write that much.

The only comic artists I remember before college were Carl Barks and Jack Davis. I didn't know that much about comic art until during and after the university days but I'm sure I majored in drawing and painting because of the subconscious influence comics had on me. At the same time I was being exposed to everything from the French Impressionists to Francis Bacon, which I really adored, but the classics and the contemporary was coming at me simultaneously. I'd bring these Hal Foster pages to class and the teachers would just shake their heads and mutter, "Where did we fail?" There was a time, not so very long ago, when popular culture was considered just slightly above the imbecilic. Strange thing is, they weren't really bad times in other ways.

CBM: How about creators working outside of comics? Are there any artists, authors or other creative folks whose work you followed? And, again, what about their work grabbed your attention?

Jones: I love Ub Iwerks, the Disney artist. The Fleisher Studio folks and, of course, the Warner Bros. guys. I was heavy into both art nouveau and art deco for a time—I thought Alphonse Mucha was a god there for a few minutes. But you know, you move on. The key, I think, is learning that you don't have to be ashamed of something that smacks of popular art, while at the same time recognizing you needn't "like" something to appreciate its merits. It's all about education. I'm no great fan of Picasso but I like to think I know what he was doing and why. Conversely I love a lot of the old pulp artists while being keenly aware of their limitations, most of which was dictated by the format. I mean sometimes you just want a Big Mac. Remember when that phrase "guilty pleasures" was so popular? I hate that kind of elitist posturing. To me the only people who indulge in guilty pleasures are serial killers.

The problem is, our culture tends toward extremes, always jumping on the next hot thing. When I was in high school you couldn't find a book on Maxfield Parrish; now for every one Goya book there's twenty Parrish: that's acceptance of popular culture turning back on itself. That's confusing the importance of good painting with rock stars. I detest snobbery, but you need some kind of yardstick or it all sinks to the lowest common denominator.

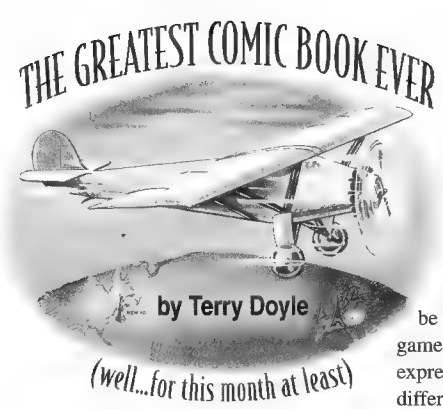
CBM: How did these varied strains of interest help steer you towards your own career?

Jones: Assuming they did. I really always felt I sort of stumbled into my career(s). One of my major faults was my inability to take any one thing seriously enough to see it through, excel at it. I've hopped all over the goddamn map. I mean I was a male model for a time for chrissake; I did those moronic TV ads for "Steam Away, the wrinkled clothing miracle!" What can be more staggeringly vapid than that? What was I thinking? Probably of the path of least resistance.

I have this built-in instinct that tells me if it's hard, I'm not going to be good at it so don't try; I think it came from watching other artists draw effortlessly. But that's not only an idiotic philosophy, [it's also] the last reason to not try something. We only really learn through failure. I know this, yet I resist frustration like the plague.

In the end, it was probably just my short attention span. I'm a case study for ADHD. But a lot of writing and drawing really is just trickery and facility. Tap dancing. Talent, when you think about it, has little to do with essential worth. You had no say in the matter, it's spliced into your DNA. You didn't do that. Not even your parents did it knowingly. It's like being born handsome or something—where's the accomplishment in that? It's why people hate beauty and talent even while pursuing it. The great artists go where their natural instincts fear to tread, succeeded in spite of themselves—not because of themselves. The rest of us are basically carpenters. Not that that's awful; a staircase is a useful thing. But a staircase is not art. Although I saw something interesting at the Whitney once.

Anyway, the thing is, Neanderthal Man made some wickedly useful cutting tools, really beautiful stuff. But it was all he ever made, the same tool over and over for thousands of years, and his species eventually died out. You can still cut with those pieces of carefully chiseled stone, however, which is kind of profound, I guess. Somewhere in this vast country of ours a forgotten Neanderthal cutting tool is lying in some sequestered glen waiting for some carefree hiker to walk by and slice his foot on it.

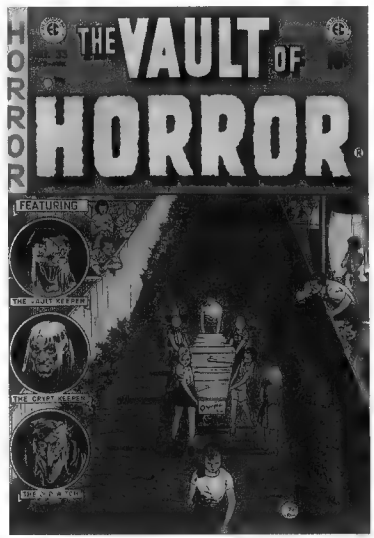


"Vault of Horror" #33

It was winter 1978. The location, a Comic Mart in Manchester, England. I was on a mission to seek out old editions of EC comic books. The Entertaining Comics Group, a remarkable publishing outfit I had discovered earlier in the year via a series of East Coast Comics classic reprint titles. I was 21 years of age—hardly a young impressionable kid. My era of nostalgia had been the 1960s, with a strong preoccupation for Marvel super-hero titles. EC was a new discovery, and it took a lot to impress this somewhat jaded adult re-exploring the world of comic-books. But EC had been no ordinary publisher. In the pre-Comics Code days of the early 1950s, EC had produced what I firmly believe to be the finest-ever anthology titles (war, science-fiction, crime, horror and humor). Standard of writing and illustration were second to none. Now my interest in comic books was no longer nostalgia-driven. Now, nostalgia had been supplanted by aesthetics as a driving influence.

Scanning the walls of the Comic Mart, my trained eyes carefully searched for EC titles amidst the overwhelming array of super-hero comics. On one dealer's wall-display appeared a small selection of EC horror books. One issue in particular caught my eye and commanded my attention: *Vault of Horror* #33 (Oct/Nov 1953), with cover art by Johnny Craig.

The cover depicts a funeral procession, staged by a group of seven solemn-faced kids, as they carry their home-made coffin along a back-entry between rows of houses. Out of their back yards, adults look on in mild amusement. To the adults, this appears to be some kind of macabre role-playing game. But judging by the somber expressions of the kiddies, there lies a different tale. A good cover intrigues, makes you want the full story. Is the funeral an elaborate childhood game, or does something more dark and sinister lie behind it all? Come on, now, this *is* an EC horror comic. Craig's cover had worked its magic on me and, following a quick inspection of the book, I coughed up the dealer's over-inflated asking price. ECs had never been distributed in this country at time of publication, so any editions surfacing over here invariably carried a premium (and only a small amount of reprint material existed at this time).



Returning home that evening, I sat down to read and savor the book at my leisure. The artistic line-up of Reed Crandall, Jack Davis, George Evans and 'Ghastly' Graham Ingels (fronted by Craig's wonderfully-intriguing cover) remains, to this day, what I consider to be the quintessential team-up for an EC horror comic.

The lead eight-page story, "Together They Lie!", is one of only nine horror stories illustrated by Reed Crandall for EC. Here, he provides a rare replacement for Johnny Craig as lead-story artist. In an archetypal tale of revenge beyond the grave, Crandall's (illustrative) art is superb—the highlight of which is a rotting corpse clawing its way out of a rain-softened grave, to track down those responsible for the death of its wife (and own suicide). Here, scripter Al Feldstein's commentary provides a perfect partnership between story and art, as the tale draws to its grim conclusion:

"The thing moved awkwardly forward . . . Stumbling on decayed legs . . . Covered with slime . . . Bits of flesh fell away as it tottered over the countryside. Finally it stood before the Horton mansion, grinning in at the couple seated before the fire . . . As the French doors smashed open and the rotted and foul-smelling thing came through, Mitch and Agnes screamed . . ."

"Let the Punishment Fit the Crime!", by Jack Davis, is the story behind Craig's superlative cover. The tale is told via a series of flashbacks, as town residents recall circumstances leading up to the children's funeral procession. Here, the twist-in-the-tail ending is predictable (even to those unfamiliar with standard EC plot devices), but is compensated for by prime Davis artwork. In particular, Davis's flair for characterization is especially pleasing on the eye; each of the (nameless) town's inhabitants we are introduced to is distinctly unique—looking as though each "have a history."

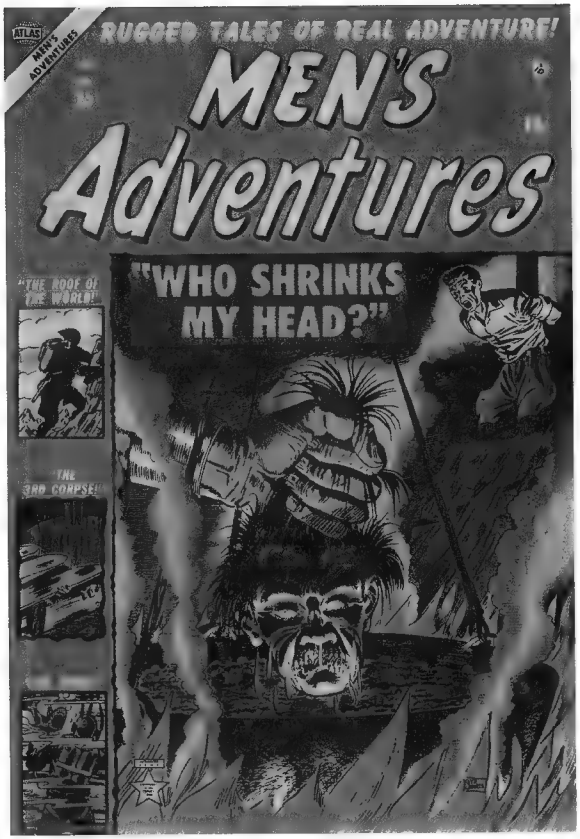
The book's third tale, "A Slight Case of Murder!", by George Evans, is what I personally rate as one of EC's best-ever horror stories. What we have here is an enthralling murder-mystery, as former resident Doc Swanson returns to the

[continued on page 79]

ATLAS HORROR

The great years of comic book horror were 1952 through 1954, when the magazine racks were a sea of corpses and creatures and crazed faces. Atlas (as Marvel billed itself back then) led the pack with thirteen titles—all containing a memorable mix of themes and talents.

by Pat Calhoun



Men's Adventures #25 (Jan 1954). Syd Shores provides the high-impact image on this classic cover representing a special subgenre of the severed head theme!

Focusing on a topic like severed heads will thus also yield a charming "cross-section" of what Atlas was all about and how many fine artists contributed to what became a vast library of four color fantasy.

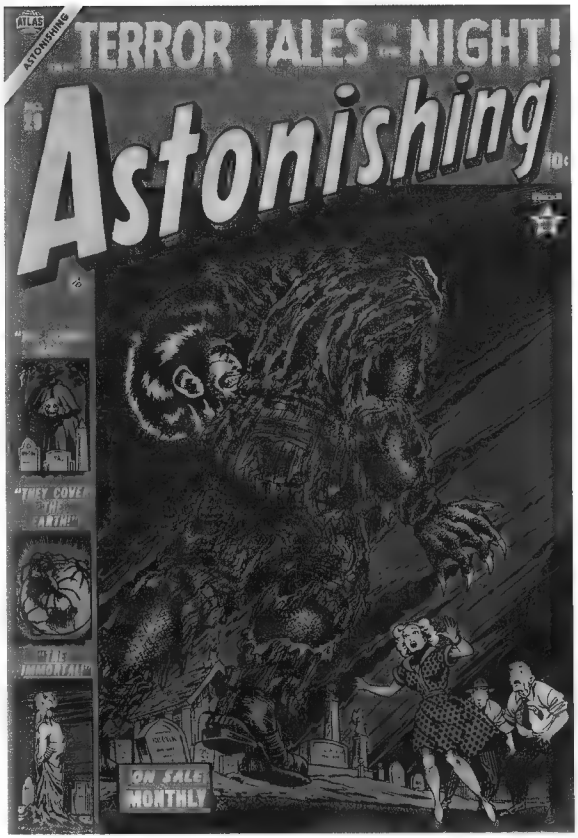
An Atlas decapitation cover wasn't so much meant to inspire horror, but rather to instantly convey that the book was "horror." This was the law of that wonderfully crowded news-stand. Eyes would browse, lingering but a moment on each image. The faster you identified your genre the better, and Atlas combined high impact graphics with catchy titles and delivered on the insides as well. Each book featured four or five stories, almost always readable, usually enjoyable, and often excellent! And the wide range of artists offered a variety of styles, many producing some of the best work of their careers as editor Stan Lee wisely abandoned a house style and encouraged them to pursue individual interpretations.

Russ Heath's cover for *Spellbound* #4 (Jun 1952) can't seem to suppress an element of whimsy as the hubby comes home to find his wife holding her head on her lap and greeting him. There are some great stories in this issue. The opener is "Knave of Diamonds," written by Don Rico and drawn by Dick Ayers—a tasty tale of crime and punishment. Russ Heath's emphatic art adds spice to "One Way Ticket": love on the rocks and death on the rails. And closing the book Joe Sinnott shines, rendering rabies in "Mad Dog."

Spellbound's publishing history shows how much Atlas reacted to the censorship crisis. It ran for 23 issues from March 1952 through June 1954, then left off as the Comics Code Authority set up its controls in late 1954, returning with a toned-down product for 11 post-Code issues from October 1955, ending with #34 in June 1957.

Strange Tales #16 (Mar 1953) features an excellent cover and lead story art by Harry Anderson, who did a lot of good work for Atlas specializing in stories of the old country—this tale from 1906 Paris was right down his alley. It's about a guy who survives a "French haircut" but regrets it. Also in this issue Stan Lee and Mike Sekowsky ply their trade on one of the great Atlas recurring themes: the Death Row story in "They Made Me a Ghost."

"SEVERED HEADS"



Astonishing #29 (Jan 1954). No one drew more ragged clothing on covers than Bill Everett; he made "holes" a fashion statement forty years ahead of its time.

Strange Tales is often referred to as Atlas' flagship title due to its impressive 17-year run (from #1 dated June 1951 through #168 May 1968) and for being one of the two pre-Code titles to survive into and beyond the "pre-hero" era that began in 1959.

The cover to *Journey into Unknown Worlds* #21 (Aug 1953) puts a wry spin on the horror of headlessness. Things get right down to business inside with a compelling tale of alien invasion, "The Most Hated Man in the World," elegantly illustrated by Joe Sinnott. "Someone isn't There" is a clever story of mysticism and murder. And "The Dead of Winter" is inked by fantasy-master Matt Fox, who turns a tepid tale into a visual tour de force.

Although it fit pretty well into the mix, *Journey into Unknown Worlds* was designed more as a science fiction title (back when the first issue—#36 Sep 1950—continued the numbering of *Teen*), and even after adopting the fantasy format in 1952 still seemed to offer a little more SF than the others.

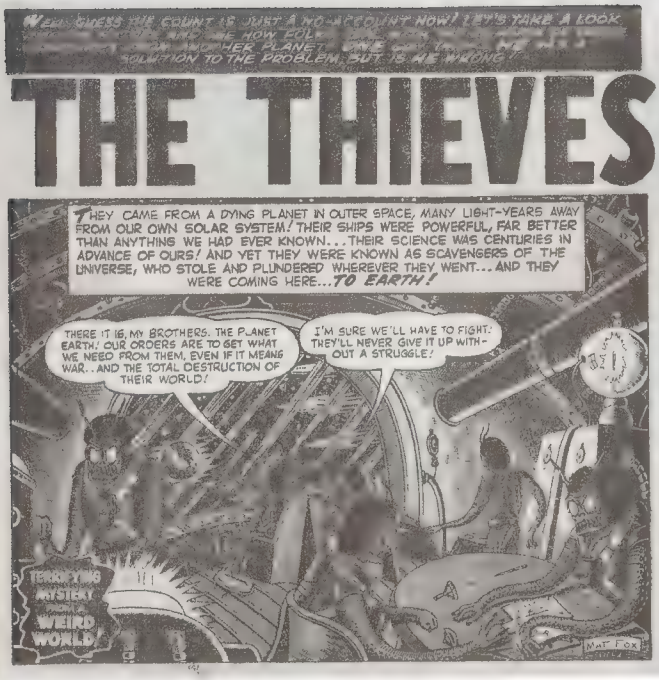
Bill Everett's cover for *Astonishing* #29 (Jan 1954) is dark and gloomy, but still delivers that "severed head" shock of recognition. There are no decapitations inside, but there are two SF stories, both by specialists at that glorious genre—Russ Heath and Joe Sinnott.

Astonishing is the one pre-Code fantasy title that began as a super-hero book, with the first two issues appearing as *Marvel Boy*, who continued as the cover feature on *Astonishing* #3 through #5 in 1951.

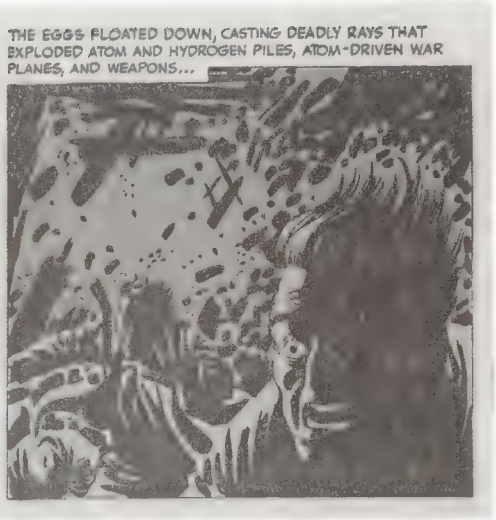
Adventures into Weird Worlds #27 (Mar 1954) is one of those supreme Atlas books where a superb cover packages five

WHEN YOU GAMBLE FOR HIGH STAKES, YOU TAKE A CHANCE! OF COURSE, YOU MAY BE LUCKY — BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU MAY DRAW —
THE KNAVE OF DIAMONDS
A HORROR TALE TO HOLD YOU SPELLBOUND!
A-307
THE PLACE: THE HUGE PLANT OF THE KING PRINTING CORPORATION, PRINTERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF PRINTING PAPERS AND INKS! JUST ANOTHER OF AMERICA'S THRIVING INDUSTRIES — BUT INSIDE, A FAR DIFFERENT SORT OF SITUATION WAS TAKING PLACE...
King PRINTING CORPORATION
BUT I TELL YOU, MR. KING, I'VE JUST GOT TO HAVE ANOTHER RAISE! I CAN'T GET ALONG ON THE MONEY I'M MAKING NOW!
YOU MEAN SHE CAN'T GET ALONG, YANCEY? WHY DON'T YOU GET RID OF THAT BLONDE LEECH?
ALL NAMES AND PLACES IN THESE STORIES ARE FICTITIOUS ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN ACTUAL PERSONS OR PLACES AND THOSE USED IN THESE STORIES IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL

Don Rico had been a writer/artist/editor at "Marvel" in the "Timely" era of the 1940s, and Dick Ayers would go on to be a key artist on Marvel's silver super-heroes. In "Knave of Diamonds" they collaborated on a unique and delicious horror yarn. (**Spellbound** #4)


THE THIEVES
THEY CAME FROM A DYING PLANET IN OUTER SPACE, MANY LIGHT-YEARS AWAY FROM OUR OWN SOLAR SYSTEM! THEIR SHIPS WERE POWERFUL, FAR BETTER THAN ANYTHING WE HAD EVER KNOWN... THEIR SCIENCE WAS CENTURIES IN ADVANCE OF OURS! AND YET THEY WERE KNOWN AS SCAVENGERS OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO STOLE AND PLUNDERED WHEREVER THEY WENT... AND THEY WERE COMING HERE... TO EARTH!
THERE IT IS, MY BROTHERS. THE PLANET EARTH. OUR ORDERS ARE TO GET WHAT WE NEED FROM THEM, EVEN IF IT MEANS WAR.. AND THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THEIR WORLD!
I'M SURE WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT. THEY'LL NEVER GIVE IT UP WITHOUT A STRUGGLE!
TERRIFYING MYSTERY TALES OF WEIRD WORLDS
MAT FOX

Matt Fox established himself as a horror master with a series of stunning covers for the pulp magazine **Weird Tales** in the late 1940s. The SF horror in this story is extraordinarily effective—add in the Fox factor and it's almost unbearably good. (**Adventures Into Weird Worlds** #27)



Two choice panels from "The Most Hated Man in the World" drawn by Joe Sinnott. The aliens shoot deadly rays that detonate our atomic bombs right on their launch pads and in their storage areas. (**Journey Into Unknown Worlds** #21)

worthwhile stories that all offer appealing art. Leading off after Joe Maneely's magnificent cover, "The Man Who Wasn't" is mad scientist stuff drawn by Mort Lawrence. Sid Greene serves up the gleefully grim "The Dwarf of Horrormoor." Matt Fox works lurid magic in "The Thieves," a profound parable of Earth's end. Carl Burgos renders an inspiring first contact yarn in "The Invaders." And the finale is "Half-Human," a superior tale of man versus machine told with graphic gusto by Robert Q. Sale.

Adventures into Weird Worlds was the first of five Atlas fantasy titles to premiere in the first half of 1952, and one of two titles destined to die off in 1954 (along with *Adventures into Terror*) as the words "weird" and "terror" were banned from comic titles by the Comics Code Authority when they came into being at the end of that year as a result of government threats to police the industry.

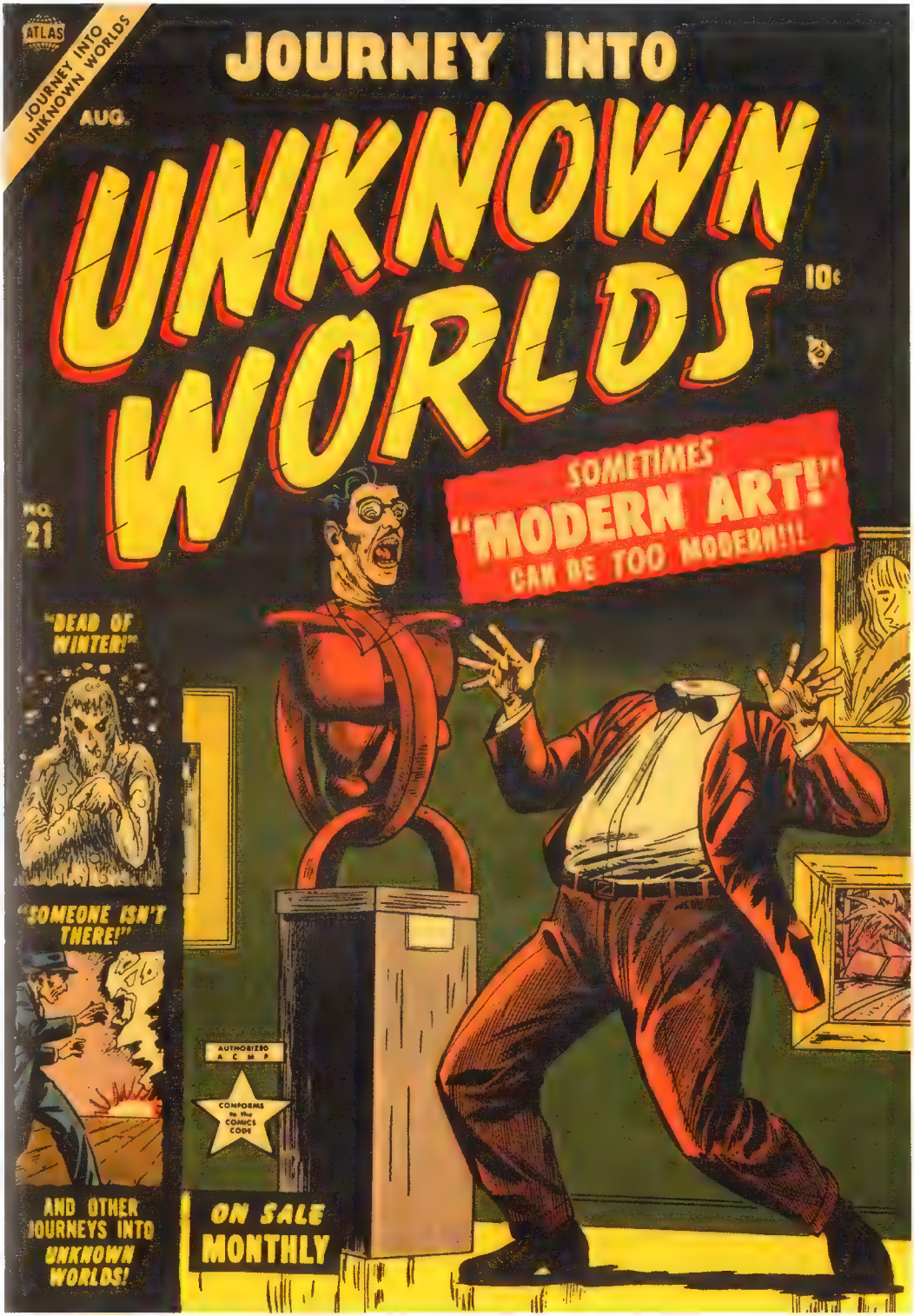
Here's a bonus book from a bonus fantasy title: *Men's Adventures* #25 (Jan 1954) is the fifth of six issues of this tough guy title that had just previously (to #21, the first weird issue) been a war title. Fantasy and horror were so popular that other genres often either borrowed their trappings or switched over. Although *Men's Adventures* #21 through #23 featured the standard mix, #25 really was more of a rugged adventure book with exotic locales and dangerous doings. Although the shrunken head cover and lead story are horrifying, there are no supernatural elements in the issue. Instead there's a mountain-climbing yarn, a shark-hunting underwater thriller, and an escape from a Devil's Island style prison.

Men's Adventures #26 returned to the horror mix, and in #27 Marvel's big three Golden Age super-heroes—Captain America, Submariner and the Human Torch—appeared as part of a revival attempt that began in *Young Men* #24 (Dec 1953). They ran in five issues of *Young Men* and two of *Men's Adventures* with the characters and both titles ending with #28.

This severed head gallery gives a glimpse of five of the 13 Atlas fantasy titles that dominated the pre-Code comic racks, and there's no better way to finish than with a list of the whole baker's dozen: *Adventures into Terror*, *Adventures into Weird Worlds*, *Astonishing*, *Journey into Mystery*, *Journey into Unknown Worlds*, *Marvel Tales*, *Menace*, *Mystery Tales*, *Mystic*, *Spellbound*, *Strange Tales*, *Suspense* and *Uncanny Tales*.

Strange Tales #16 (Mar 1953). Harry Anderson gives another one of his graphic "history lessons" in "You Can't Kill Me," the story of a "shortening" set in 1906 Paris.

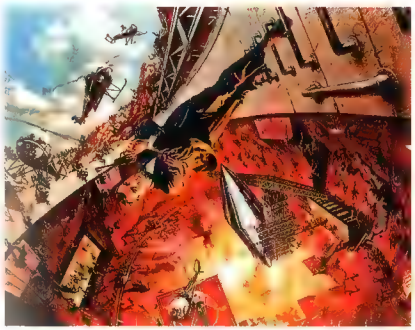
Spellbound #4 (Jun 1952). Before collecting made the first issues of a title popular, publishers were usually wary of low numbers as they meant the run had yet to pass the test of time—hence no "#4" appears on this cover.



Journey Into Unknown Worlds #21 (Aug 1953). The thin line between surrealism and horror gets erased in "Modern Art." This issue also features fabulous Joe Sinnott art on a terrific tale of interplanetary war.

Adventures Into Weird Worlds #27. Mar 1954 (says Mar 1953 in indicia) One of the greatest covers by Atlas powerhouse Joe Maneely, who produced a lot of fine work in most of the genres before his sudden death in a railway accident in 1958.

ERRATA



Unfortunately in *Comic Book Marketplace* #111, a corrupted software file spoiled several of the images in our Paul Gulacy interview. ABOVE LEFT: The cover to *SCI Spy* #6, Paul's homage to Frank McCarthy's illustration for the James Bond classic *You Only Live Twice*. ABOVE RIGHT: Paul's exquisite and sharply detailed cover to *Ms. Tree Quarterly*. Be sure to pick up DC's *Catwoman* to get a monthly fix of Gulacy's art.

RIGHT: In *CBM* #111 we inadvertently credited this photo of J. David Spurlock and Neal Adams to the wrong New York comic shop. The book signing occurred at Forbidden Planet comics in New York City.

The Amazing ACORN

FEBRUARY, 1935
NEW FUN
THE BIG COMIC MAGAZINE
JACK WOODS
NEW COMIC STRIPS • AIRCRAFT • RADIO • MOVIES
STORIES • ADVENTURE • MYSTERY • SPORTS • PRIZES

by Will Murray

There's no designation in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* for an acorn book, but if there was I would have to nominate Marvel's *Amazing Mysteries* #32 as one of the most important, and most unlikely.

By acorn book, I mean an inauspicious title from which mighty oaks grew, whether they be companies or genres. *More Fun* #1 is an acorn title. It kicked off the original comic book. So is *Action Comics* #1. And *Fantastic Four* #1. ACG's *Adventures into the Unknown* was the unassuming acorn which spawned the entire horror comic book field, which included everything from the great ECs of the '50s to the mucky flood of mediocre stuff that coexisted with it. *AITU* was not, technically speaking, the first horror comic book. It was the first horror entry that caught on. And when you catch on in the realm of comic books, you usually start a forest fire of imitators.

# of Atlas Horror

THE Fantastic Four
1 NOV.
10¢
FEATURING "THE THING!" "MR. FANTASTIC!" "HUMAN TORCH!" "INVISIBLE GIRL!" TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
I--I CAN'T TURN INVISIBLE FAST ENOUGH!! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE, TORCH?
JUST WAIT AND SEE, S STER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
ME THREE, OF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE! IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO TAKE A HAND!
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN ROPES TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION!

Opinions vary on the Marvel/Atlas horror titles that filled the racks in the pre- and post-Comic Code 1950s. Some collectors love 'em. Others don't care for 'em. Me, I don't usually collect them. They were before my time, collectively-speaking. When I became aware of Marvel, the *Tales to Astonish/Amazing Adult Fantasy* era was in full cry. Those weren't true horror titles, more like fantasy escapist monster fare. And there were only a half dozen of them at any one time. This was a far cry from the mid-fifties, when Marvel's horror line alone constituted a mini-empire of some 12 to 16 separate titles devoted to the strange, the unusual, the uncanny. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

The tiny acorn out of which this wild forest bloomed was an odd little thing that trickled out early in the pivotal year of 1949. It was pivotal because that was the dark year that saw the old Marvel superheroes, who had enjoyed such sales success through the war years, begin to wilt and wither. *Human Torch Comics* became *Real Love Tales* with the May 1949 issue. *Sub-Mariner Comics* turned into *Amazing Mysteries* that same month. By the end of the year, *Captain America Comics* would mutate into *Captain America's Weird Tales* before winking out of existence altogether.

This was not just a swift retreat away from superheroes. Comics themselves were under attack. The popular magazines of the day were full of anti-comic book tirades and paper indictments. All of it centered on the once-invincible

Martin Goodman

Editorial Consultant: Jean Thompson, M. D., Psychiatrist, Child Guidance Bureau; Board of Education, New York City

Dr. Jean Thompson's credential's as editorial consultant appeared on the first page of Marvel's comics in those early years.

superhero. Why? Because that's how comics were perceived in many quarters. As vehicles for superheroic adventures.

In her 1947 *New Republic* essay, "Junior Has a Craving," reporter Marya Mannes surveyed the comic book scene. Remember, this is pre-horror. While admitting that "Some of the action comics like *Superman, Captain Marvel, Captain Midnight* and *Don Winslow of the Navy* are 'clean' adventure stories, highly patriotic and virtuous and seldom actively gruesome," Mannes went on to bash the rest:

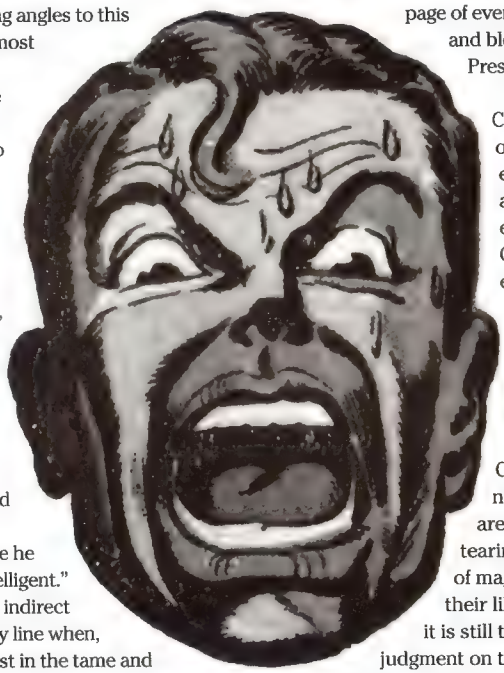
"But there are several disturbing angles to this theme. The first and perhaps the most important, is that it is based on a concept of 'hooded justice.' These 'heroes' take things into their own hands. They are accountable to no law, no higher body or organization, no state or city or national discipline. Patriotic as they may be, virtuous as they may be, they are completely lawless. This is certainly the dream of all children, since all children hate authority... The 'good' conquers the 'bad' in all these stories purely and simply because the 'good,' through magical properties, is physically stronger. In 20 million comic books sold, it would be hard to find a single instance where a character conquered only because he was kind, honest, generous or intelligent."

The article seemed to point an indirect finger at Martin Goodman's Timely line when, lamenting children's lack of interest in the tame and realistic *True Comics,* Mannes explains it by stating, "Nobody gets socked in the face in *True Comics* and there are no red skulls." That could only be a lower-case dig at Captain America's longtime foe.

All that scorn and strife were having a deep impact on Goodman's operation. Beginning in 1949, he orders a retooling. One of the first things he does is to brand each cover with a new company name, Marvel Comics, along with what looks like a laurel leaf. I suppose this is meant to signify that Marvel Comics were offering some kind of superior literature. If so, this may have been the first time in literary history that a laurel leaf doubled as a fig leaf.

Popular myth has it the brand name Marvel came from *Marvel Mystery Comics,* and certainly Goodman had every right to the name. But I have to wonder with Captain Marvel being held up everywhere as an example of "good" comics, if Goodman wasn't trying to steal back a little of the thunder Fawcett had first borrowed from him when they appropriated the name Marvel for their superhero after Goodman had pioneered it as a comic book brand name.

Goodman also hired as an "editorial consultant," one Jean Thompson, M. D., a psychiatrist with the Child Guidance Bureau of New York City's Board of Education. The first page of every Marvel Comic carried her name and blessing at the top, just as Stan Lee Presents would decades later.

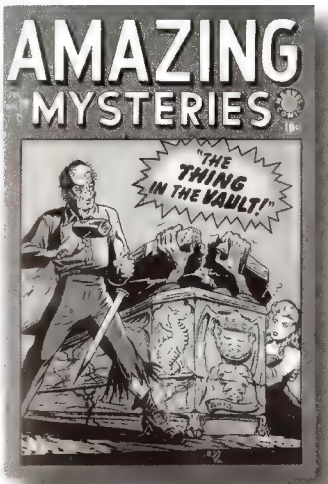


The newly-christened Marvel Comics Group carried "A Letter to our Readers and their Parents" in every issue. Unsigned, but presumably written by Stan Lee, it recounted the fact that back in the 18th Century, book stores were castigated as "the slop shops of literature" simply because they sold junky popular novels—novels like *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe.* Jumping off from that high point, Lee wrote:

"Just as the critics of the 18th Century rapped the books which are now classics, in the same way there are critics of today, screaming and tearing out their hair, because a new kind of magazine, still in its infancy, is not to their liking. And as in the case of the novel, it is still too early for any one man to pass judgment on the comics.

"Let these critics of today look to their history. Let them decide if they want to be remembered as the 20th Century counterpart of the people who called *Robinson Crusoe* 'slop.'

"And let the people of America decide if they want to be swayed by critics exercising premature judgment, or if they want to wait and watch, and soon realize that most comic magazines are really good, clean, healthful and entertaining



***Amazing Mysteries* #33 was the last issue of the title as a horror comic.**

reading matter."

One of the most vicious attacks came from a writer named Gershon Legman, whose 1949 book, *Love and Death: A Study in Censorship,* went after comic books in general and Martin Goodman in particular. Legman actually claimed that Timely was run by homosexuals! His evidence: they operated out of the obviously-phallic Empire State Building!

Apparently a combination of scurrilous attacks and declining sales forced Goodman and Lee to sacrifice their superheroes. They struck off into new genres. Westerns. Love. Western Love. And Horror. Which brings us back to *Amazing Mysteries* #32, May 1949.

I first encountered this comic book in a quarter bin so long ago I've long forgotten the what or the where. It was one of several late '40s Marvel titles I'd picked up at an old convention out of sheer curiosity. One was an *Ideal* #1 and another was *Annie Oakley* #3.

All had their cover mastheads razored off, a certain sign that they were returns sold out the distributor's back door. There seemed to be a lot of 1948-49 comic books floating around in such condition—strongly suggesting that the attacks on the industry were having an impact. In the trade, these were called back then "premature returns." Comics which never saw a newsstand, or the light of day. Their logos were simply returned for credit without the public being given a chance to check them out or pass them up.

I had no idea of this title's true significance for years. But it marked Marvel's first exploration into the horror field. Knowing that after Marvel started calling itself Atlas, it became one of the kings of 1950s horror comics, you would think that this marked the beginning of a long and glorious run. Hardly. *Amazing Mysteries* lasted a dismal two issues in this format. With #34, it became a crime title along the lines of *Crime Does Not Pay.*

Although not technically a number #1, *Amazing Mysteries* #32 is typical of many Marvel #1s. For one thing, it bears all the earmarks of having been flung together in a violent rush. *Daredevil* #1 was like that. Multiple finishers were brought in to make the press date. Several artist and inker styles are present in Kid Colt's origin in his first issue. Even *Fantastic Four* #1, although penciled by Jack Kirby, shows signs of a small army of inkers at work.

Amazing Mysteries #32 falls into that crazy category. One huge clue was the cover. It showed a spooky midnight scene depicting a procession of torch-bearing people shuffling out of the sea and up a twisting mountain trail into the fiery maw of what looks for all the world like a monster's head. The story is called "The Isle of No Return!"

Now sometimes old Marvel comics covers bore no resemblance to anything within its glossy pages, being calculated only for shock and sales effect—not necessarily in that order. Not here. Open the book and you *will* find an Isle of no Return. It's a two-page *text* story illustrated by a miniature reproduction of the cover. Now this is truly bizarre. Comic books carried those text features only because U. S. Postal regulations required it. In the industry, they were about as important as the indicia. Editors assumed nobody ever read them. Yet here one was being cover-featured!

I'd never before seen or heard of such a thing. It's not exactly a cheat, but it sure comes close. I've long wondered whether the text story was written to justify a preexisting cover, or if Editor Stan Lee—who wrote the tiny tale by the way—decided none of the other features would support a

The bizarre cover art for issue #32.

Editorial Consultant: Jean Thampson, M.D., Psychiatrist, Child Guidance Bureau; Board of Education, New York City
THE THING AT CHUGAMUNG COVE!
"INSIDE THE STATION, I GLANCED AROUND / STARING AT ME WAS A PECULIAR BUT FAMILIAR-LOOKING CREATURE / HIS FEATURES WERE CRUDE AND COARSE / HIS SKIN, WHITE AS A FISHBELLY / HIS EYES SLIGHTLY BULGED, AND DEVOID OF EYELASHES AND BROWS / SUDDENLY, I REALIZED THAT I WAS LOOKING INTO A MIRROR / THE CREATURE WAS ME!"
CAN THERE EXIST, IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA, NAMELESS SLIMY MONSTERS THAT ONCE WERE MEN? CAN THESE LOATHSOME, SCALY THINGS CRAWL UPWARD FROM THEIR MOLDY CATACOMBS OF HORROR, TO THE LAND FROM WHENCE THEY SPAWNED, AND CLAIM THE SOULS AND BODIES OF LIVING MEN? DO YOU SCOFF AT THESE QUESTIONS? THEN READ HERE THE STORY. . THE HIDEOUS TALE, AS SET FORTH IN THE "MONSTROUS HORRORS OF CHUGAMUNG!"
3691
ON A BLEAK GRAY DAY, SUCH AS TODAY, THE UPPER FLOORS OF THE TOWERING MANSFIELD BUILDING, HOME OF MANSFIELD PUBLICATIONS, ARE SHROUDED IN A WEEPING VEIL OF FOG-MIST /
HIGH UP, ON THE FIFTY-SIXTH FLOOR, MARTIN MANSFIELD, PUBLISHER, SITS IN HIS OFFICE, RESTLESS AS ALWAYS, AS THE FOG SWIRLS SOUNDLESSLY OUTSIDE /
COME IN /
KNOCK
KNOCK

The splash page to "The Thing at Chugamung Cove." The featured publishing firm and publisher in the story bear a striking resemblance to Marvel and Martin Goodman.

cover. Sounds crazy, right? How can you possibly publish a comic book whose interior stories wouldn't rate the cover? As we go through the issue tale by timid tale, you'll understand why I wonder what I wonder.

As a first foray into a field Marvel would soon dominate by sheer number of titles, if by nothing else, *Amazing Mysteries* #32 is, to put it kindly, peculiar. It opens up promisingly enough with a foggy tale called "The Thing from Chugamung Cove!" The yarn starts on the 56th floor of Mansfield Publications' towering Mansfield Building, in the office of publisher Martin Mansfield. Knowledgeable collectors will recognize him as Martin Goodman and Timely/Marvel in disguise. The Mansfield Building looks exactly like the Empire State Building, which headquartered Timely/Marvel in 1948. When managing editor Lee Hart comes in with a great science fiction script, Mansfield won't allow it to be published. He's adamant.

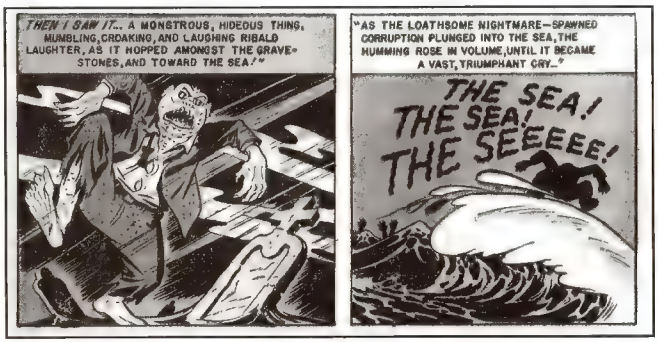
Mansfield tells Hart it all goes back to missing partner, John St. Stengel, with whom he started a line of horror magazines. Years ago, Mansfield had sent St. Stengel to look into rumors that Atlantis lay off the New England coast and was now inhabited by people who evolved to live underwater. But he never returned from Chugamung Cove. Instead, his diary was mailed back. Goodman hands Lee—I mean, Mansfield hands Hart the diary and tells him to read it. What follows is told in traditional horror first-person horror-story narrative. St. Stengel discovers that long ago a sea captain rescued a mystery woman from the sea and married her. A baby was born. But he was not human. Later, the woman murders her husband and flees into the sea. No one ever got a good look at her.

If I tell you that John St. Stengel has an unnatural fear of the sea and is an orphan, would that give you a clue where all this is going? What if I remind you of H. P. Lovecraft's classic and very similar tale of New England horror, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*? How about this? After reading in the diary that St. Stengel discovered that all offspring of humans and Atlanteans turn into amphibians, and that he was the son of the sea captain and the weird woman from the sea, Mansfield rushes to Chugamung Cove to locate his partner, and encounters...shall we say, a *changed* man?

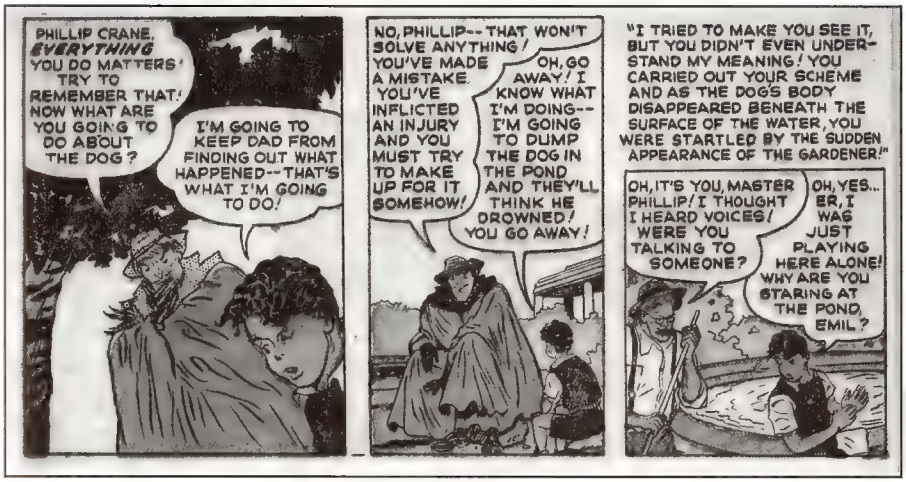
The story is appropriately atmospheric. It builds nicely to a revelatory climax. But at the end the artist throws it all away by depicting the white froglike thing that was once John St. Stengel like he jumped out of a Warner Bros. cartoon. He runs away screaming "The Sea! The Sea! THE SEEEEA!" with all the loose-jointed galloping comedy of Yosemite Sam chasing after Bug Bunny.

And that, boys and girls, is why Mansfield Publications won't print science fiction.

I don't know who drew this story. No one apparently does. But I suspect it may have been scripted by *Weird Tales* pulp writer Manly Wade Wellman. It has his flavor. And Wellman had been a very prolific writer of what he called "squinkas"—comics scripts—during the 1940s. Circa 1942, he wrote Captain America, Hurricane and others for Timely. By 1948, he was at ACG, scripting horror for *Adventures into the Unknown,*


THEN I SAW IT... A MONSTROUS, HIDEOUS THING, MUMBLING, CROAKING, AND LAUGHING RIBALD LAUGHTER, AS IT HOPPED AMONGST THE GRAVE-STONES, AND TOWARD THE SEA!"
"AS THE LOATHSOME NIGHTMARE—SPAWNED CORRUPTION PLUNGED INTO THE SEA, THE HUMMING ROSE IN VOLUME, UNTIL IT BECAME A VAST, TRIUMPHANT CRY..."
THE SEA! THE SEA! THE SEEEEE!

The ridiculously bad conclusion to "The Thing at Chugamung Cove."


PHILLIP CRANE, EVERYTHING YOU DO MATTERS! TRY TO REMEMBER THAT! NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT THE DOG?
I'M GOING TO KEEP DAD FROM FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED--THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO DO!
NO, PHILLIP--THAT WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING! YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE. YOU'VE INFLICTED AN INJURY AND YOU MUST TRY TO MAKE UP FOR IT SOMEHOW!
OH, GO AWAY! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING--I'M GOING TO DUMP THE DOG IN THE POND AND THEY'LL THINK HE DROWNED! YOU GO AWAY!
"I TRIED TO MAKE YOU SEE IT, BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND MY MEANING! YOU CARRIED OUT YOUR SCHEME AND AS THE DOG'S BODY DISAPPEARED BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER, YOU WERE STARTLED BY THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF THE GARDENER!"
OH, IT'S YOU, MASTER PHILLIP! I THOUGHT I HEARD VOICES! WERE YOU TALKING TO SOMEONE?
OH, YES... ER, I WAS JUST PLAYING HERE ALONE! WHY ARE YOU STARING AT THE POND, EMIL?

ABOVE and BELOW: Gene Colan penciled this cautionary tale featuring the only appearance of the character Justice.

along with his fellow *Weird Tales* crony Frank Belknap Long. Wellman certainly could have been tossing horror scripts Stan Lee's way. For that matter, so could have Long. For only a pulpster would write a line like "The doctor, his mind spinning madly by the awful horror and its fetid passing, made another find! It was the body of her young husband...slashed and mutilated beyond the blackest conjurations of mortal madness and morbidity!"

Next up was "Menace from the Past!" It's hard to know what to call this little number. A cautionary tale? A supernatural spoof? A misfire? Phillip Crane is the nominal protagonist. He wakes up one night in his Sutton Place apartment and there's a weird guy materializing. He looks uncannily like Mr. Crime, the mustachioed mascot of Lev Gleason's *Crime Does not Pay.* Crane recognizes him as an apparition who first materialized to scold him for stoning a puppy to death as a boy. One by one, the mystery man recounts all of Crane's terrible misdeeds in life. Finally, Crane can't take it anymore. Neither can the mystery man, who informs him that this is the end of the road. "Tell me—NOW do you know who I am?"

"You're—you're JUSTICE!"

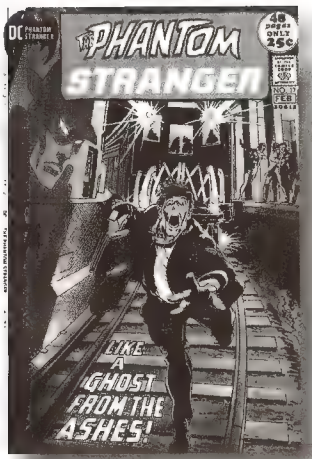
Justice tells Phillip to kindly step out of his body. And wonder of wonders, he does. Standing before a window, Justice says, "Just one step, Phillip! The abyss of time...the secret grottoes of the night! The twilight hour...the unknown! The lapse of seconds between sleeping and waking...between life and death! Go to the window, Phillip!" Obeying, Phillip jumps—apparently to his doom. What kind of doom is anyone's supposition. If he's left his body, no fall could hurt him. Could it? But no time to ponder that, for Justice is off to seek another...victim...culprit...? I have no idea.

This tale reads very much like the kind of radio drama they used to run on *Suspense* or *Lights Out.* It probably would have worked better on radio. But as drawn, with every scene right there on the page and no place to use your imagination, it just lays there. Gene Colan penciled this one, although the inker remains a mystery to this very day.

Rounding out the issue is what I assume to be a surviving inventory story featuring the star of the rare 1948 Marvel one-shot, *The Witness.* Although the Witness appeared modeled after radio characters like The Shadow and the Whistler, he looks uncannily like DC's Phantom Stranger, who had yet to be created. Leftover Witness stories popped up in titles ranging from *Captain America* to *Ideal.* It just so happens that he

THE MENACE FROM THE PAST!
MIDNIGHT! THE HOUR OF SHADOWS, WHEN DIMLY ACROSS THE GREYNESS OF OUR SLEEPING MINDS FLIT VAGRANT MEMORIES AND HALF-REMEMBERED DREAMS, AND THE CONSCIENCE OF MAN SLUMBERS, OR IS RUDELY AWAKENED...FITFULLY PHILLIP CRANE SLEEPS, BUT THIS NIGHT HE IS DESTINED TO RELIVE HIS YEARS IN MEMORY'S HALF-CONSCIOUSNESS, AND JUDGE HIS ACTS, AND WEIGH THEM AGAINST--HIS OWN DOOM!
IN A PENTHOUSE ON SUTTON PLACE, FAR ABOVE THE NOISES OF NEW YORK, THE CLAMMY RAYS OF A COLD MOON FILTER THROUGH THE DRAWN BLINDS AND FALL ACROSS PHILLIP CRANE'S SLEEPING FACE! HIS DREAMS ARE DISTURBED AND TROUBLED BY THE VAGUE FEELING THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS IN THE ROOM...
WHAT IS IT? WHO ARE YOU? DON'T COME CLOSER, DOWN?

JUST ONE STEP, PHILLIP! THE ABYSS OF TIME...THE SECRET GROTTOES OF THE NIGHT! THE TWILIGHT HOUR... THE UNKNOWN! THE LAPSE OF SECONDS BETWEEN SLEEPING AND WAKING... BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH! GO TO THE WINDOW, PHILLIP!
THE WINDOW--YES, YOU'RE RIGHT! I MUST--
IT'S THE ONLY WAY, PHILLIP! YOU COULDN'T LIVE WITH WHAT YOU KNOW NOW--ABOUT YOURSELF!
AIEEEEEEE!
I MUST HURRY--THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE! THERE ARE SO MANY MORE LIKE PHILLIP CRANE!
AND SO HE WALKS THE STREETS--AND THE COUNTRY LANES--AS HE DID THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, AS HE WILL THOUSANDS OF YEARS HENCE--AND FOR ALL TIME!



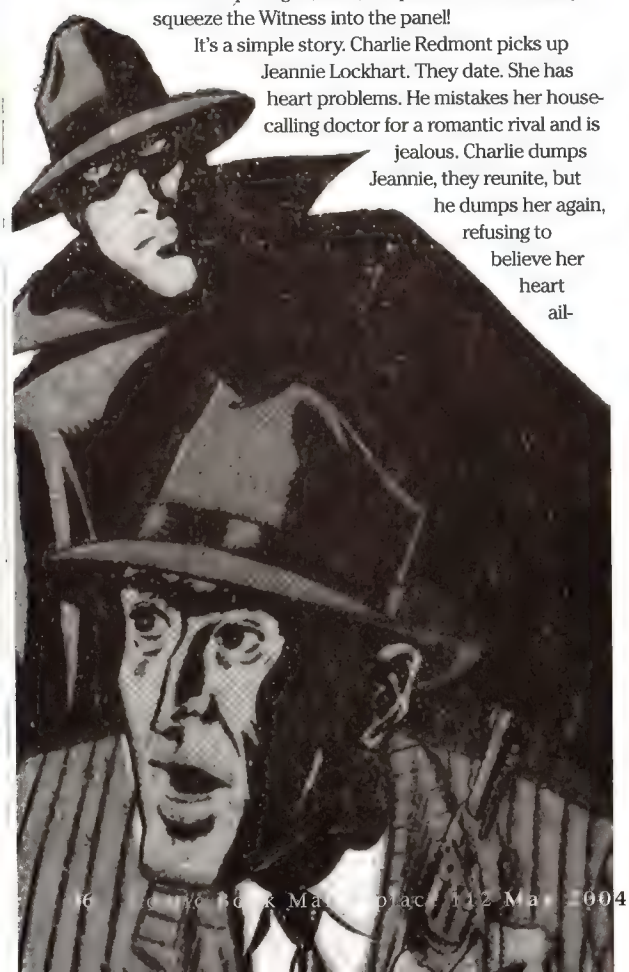
actually fit in *Amazing Mysteries*.

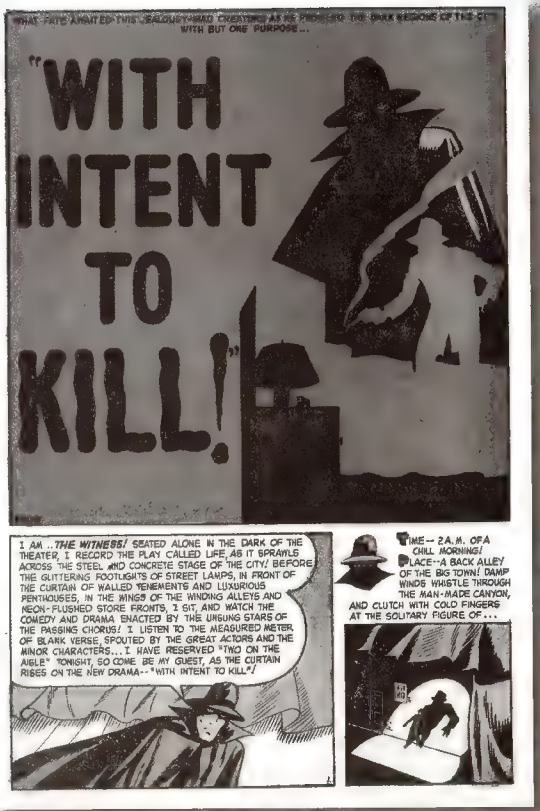
Once again, I have the eerie feeling I'm reading a rejected radio script when the Witness gives his opening speech:

"I am...THE WITNESS! Seated alone in the dark of the theater, I record the play called life, as it sprawls across the steel and concrete stage of the city! Before the glittering footlights of street lamps, in front of the curtain of walled tenements and luxurious penthouses, in the wings of the winding alleys and neon-flushed store fronts, I sit, and watch the comedy and drama enacted by the unsung stars of the passing chorus! I listen to the measured meter of blank verse, spouted by the great actors and the minor characters...I have reserved 'two on the isle' tonight, so come be my guest, as the curtain rises on the new drama—'With Intent to Kill!'"

There's so much prologue, here, the poor artist can barely squeeze the Witness into the panel!

It's a simple story. Charlie Redmont picks up Jeannie Lockhart. They date. She has heart problems. He mistakes her house-calling doctor for a romantic rival and is jealous. Charlie dumps Jeannie, they reunite, but he dumps her again, refusing to believe her heart ailment isn't just a cover for two-timing behavior. But this time because he can't get her out of his mind, Charlie decides to murder Jeannie. Sneaking into her apartment, Charlie puts a bullet into her sleeping head. And he's caught. But there's a twist. Jeanie died of a final fatal heart attack hours before the deadly bullet entered her brain. The cops arrest a stunned Charlie for intent to murder, but they can't pin actual murder charges on him. Charlie now has to live with the knowledge that not only did he misjudge his innocent girlfriend, but he probably contributed to her death through his jealous behavior.




"WITH INTENT TO KILL!"
I AM ..THE WITNESS! SEATED ALONE IN THE DARK OF THE THEATER, I RECORD THE PLAY CALLED LIFE, AS IT SPRAWLS ACROSS THE STEEL AND CONCRETE STAGE OF THE CITY! BEFORE THE GLITTERING FOOTLIGHTS OF STREET LAMPS, IN FRONT OF THE CURTAIN OF WALLED TENEMENTS AND LUXURIOUS PENTHOUSES, IN THE WINGS OF THE WINDING ALLEYS AND NEON-FLUSHED STORE FRONTS, I SIT, AND WATCH THE COMEDY AND DRAMA ENACTED BY THE UNSUNG STARS OF THE PASSING CHORUS! I LISTEN TO THE MEASURED METER OF BLANK VERSE, SPOUTED BY THE GREAT ACTORS AND THE MINOR CHARACTERS... I HAVE RESERVED "TWO ON THE AISLE" TONIGHT, SO COME BE MY GUEST, AS THE CURTAIN RISES ON THE NEW DRAMA--"WITH INTENT TO KILL"!
TIME-- 2 A.M. OF A CHILL MORNING! PLACE--A BACK ALLEY OF THE BIG TOWN! DAMP WINDS WHISTLE THROUGH THE MAN-MADE CANYON, AND CLUTCH WITH COLD FINGERS AT THE SOLITARY FIGURE OF...

***Amazing Mysteries*' final story "Intent to Kill" features The Witness, a character who uncannily looks like DC's Phantom Stranger.**

Nobody seems to know who this artist was, either.

I mentioned before that this entire issue feels flung together. A glance at the job numbers to each story confirms this. "The Thing from Chugamung Cove!" and "With Intent to Kill!" are 3000-series jobs, contemporary with stories published in 1948. Perhaps they were commissioned for an earlier horror experiment that never got off the ground. "The

Menace from the Past!" and "The Isle of No Return!" are 5000-series, and fit right in with stuff published in March 1948, which by the way is the on-sale date stamped on my copy. March 10, 1948 to be exact.

By the way, I didn't forget about "The Isle of No Return!" But it's a text story. You don't expect me to actually *read* it, do you?

Going through this issue in the light of the late '40s attacks on comic books and the guardian presence of Dr. Jean Thompson, you have to wonder of Goodman and Lee, What were they thinking?

As an exercise in horror, *Amazing Mysteries* was a spontaneous abortion. Only the lead story truly belongs to that genre. As "good, clean, healthful and entertaining reading," it was simply pathetic. Better art might have pulled the lead story out of the pits, but the others were simply too weak and vapid to amount to anything. Given how much sheer horror had been built into their superhero line, you'd think Goodman and Lee could have gotten a quicker handle on the market.

Over at *Adventures into the Unknown,* they were serving up a steady diet of vampires, werewolves and assorted ghosts, written by legitimate pulp practitioners of the weird story. And the fans were lapping it up.

Maybe Marvel was intent upon the high road. If so, it was an ignoble experiment.

The next issue featured three 5000-series stories. To illustrate how quickly Marvel was running out of original ideas, one was titled "The Thing in the Vault!" while another was called "Terror in the Tomb!"

From all circumstantial evidence, *Amazing Mysteries* would appear to have been a dismal failure. But it wasn't. No sooner had *AM* shifted over to crime stories than Marvel converted their flagship superhero title, *Marvel Mystery Comics* into the all-horror *Marvel Tales*—no doubt featuring stuff optimistically commissioned for *Amazing Mysteries.* Like all forests, this one grew slowly, but steadily, putting out shoots and then roots and before you knew it—in this case by 1951—there was a forest of creepy oaks standing where none had stood before.

By the numbers, the radio crime title *Suspense* went all-horror in the middle of 1950. You sense that Goodman and Lee were feeling their way forward. How would their readers react to weird comics? Perhaps more importantly, how would their parents?

On reflection, I have to wonder if *AM* #32 wasn't simply a marketing test. Cobble together equal parts horror, fantasy and suspense stories, and whatever gets the biggest reaction will be Marvel's new trend. Horror obviously won.

That summer, *Teen Comics* morphed into *Journey into Unknown Worlds* like Dr. Jekyll becoming Mr. Hyde, and *Joker Comics* exploded into a monster calling itself *Adventures into Terror.* The lid was off. Sales were climbing like King Kong up the side of the Empire State Building, and I strongly suspect Dr. Jean Thompson M.D. shrieked in horror and fled. How else would she have reacted to all those vampires, werewolves and assorted ghosts that Marvel had now decided were absolutely indispensable?

Good thing, too. For the titles kept coming: *Mystic, Astonishing, Journey into Mystery, Adventures into Weird Worlds, Strange Tales, Spellbound, Menace.* Goodman got so desperate for good horror titles he revived the names of two of his old horror pulps, *Uncanny Tales* and *Mystery Tales.* All different, all alike. Yet people ate them up.

The oak forest by that time called itself Atlas—which is a great name for the most prolific comics house of that decade. Not even the institution of the Comics Code early in 1955 thinned that haunted wood. It would take the great Atlas Implosion of 1957—a self-induced distribution crisis caused by a Martin Goodman miscalculation—to wring that mighty change and revive the abandoned name of Marvel Comics.

But that's a tangled tale for another time....

Special thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo for his expert help.

IT'S DONE! GOTTA SCRAM... 'FORE ANYBODY GETS WISE. QUICK.. THE DOOR!
AHHHH!
OKAY... OKAY.. YOU WIN! I KILLED HER JUST NOW, BUT I'M GLAD.. GLAD I CAN TELL YOU! I COULDN'T STAND IT! EVEN THE CHAIR... IS BETTER THAN THE TORTURE OF HER FACE IN FRONT OF ME ALL THE TIME...
YOU KILLED HER? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MAN?
YOU? HAH! WHAT A LAUGH! IT'S THE DOC HIMSELF! ALL THE TIME SHE WAS ALIVE YOU KEPT COMING BETWEEN US... NOW THAT I BUMPED HER... IT'S YOU THAT CROSSES ME UP! WHAT A LAUGH!
SO YOU'RE JEANNIE'S BOY FRIEND, CHARLIE REDMONT, EH? WELL, GET SET FOR ANOTHER JOKE, FELLER... YOU DIDN'T KILL JEANNIE!
WHA...? I DIDN'T... WHAT? OH, NO, THAT'S TOO MUCH!
RIGHT AFTER THAT BATTLE YOU HAD WITH HER TONIGHT, SHE GOT ANOTHER ATTACK! SHE WAS DESPERATELY ILL... INCURABLY ILL! SHE MANAGED TO CALL ME, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE... BY THE TIME I GOT HERE, SHE WAS DEAD! SHE PASSED AWAY AT LEAST FOUR HOURS AGO!
SHE MIGHT HAVE LIVED IF NOT FOR YOU, CHARLIE! YOUR LOVE WAS THE ONE THING THAT MIGHT HAVE CURBED HER--BUT YOU REFUSED IT TO HER!
SHE WASN'T TWO-TIMIN' ME? SHE WAS TELLIN' THE TRUTH? SHE WAS SICK? OH, NO! NO--WHAT HAVE I DONE? WHAT HAVE I DONE???
YOU'VE DONE ALMOST NOTHING, CHARLIE--LEGALLY! ALL I CAN BOOK YOU FOR IS "INTENT TO KILL"! BUT, CHARLIE, I WOULDN'T LIKE TO HAVE TO LIVE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM NOW ON! YOU'LL HAVE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TO REGRET, CHARLIE,--TO REGRET YOUR "INTENT TO KILL"!
AND SO, MY FRIEND... IT WAS CURTAINS FOR CHARLIE REDMONT! AND THIS LITTLE DRAMA IS DONE! BUT REMEMBER--THE WITNESS IS ALWAYS IN THE AUDIENCE -- WITH A SEAT RESERVED FOR YOU!

Final page to Amazing Mysteries #32 "Intent to Kill." Most of the stories in the issue resemble radio dramas.

AN ENTERTAINING EC COMIC
TO IGNORE: THOSE "B
BLACK CAT MYSTERY
WEIRD TALES OF
HORRI
SHRUNKEN SKULLS
TALES OF HORROR IN OTHER
TOMB OF TERRO
BRAND X
BRAND X
BRAND X
Tales of HORROR and SUSPENSE!
BRAND X
STRANGEST TALES
BLACK CAT MYSTERY

rand X" Horror Covers

by Steve Kronenberg

A man's face disintegrates in startling, gory detail. A monstrous mutant is chained and slowly bludgeoned, burned and impaled. A shrunken, freshly decapitated head is pulled from a magician's hat. Products of "Ghastly" Graham Ingels' demented palette? Al Feldstein's twisted imagination? Johnny Craig's bullpen of monstrous images? Not even close. All of that cover imagery—and much more like it—came not from EC's vaulted roster of artists, but from the innumerable "other" comics that shared the horror market with EC in the 1950s. In the wake of EC's well-deserved acclaim as a horror pioneer, it's easy to sometimes overlook the contribution to the genre made by other "Brand-X" books such as Harvey's *Tomb of Terror*, *Black Cat Mystery* and *Chamber of Chills*; Gilmore's *Weird Mysteries;* and Comic Media's *Horrific*. But the plain fact is that the covers of many of these alternative books provided as much envelope- pushing gore and disturbing imagery as anything produced by EC's pool of brilliant talent.

Case in point: Lee Elias' near-legendary cover for *Tomb of Terror # 15* ("Breakup" Jan 1954). This arresting, unforgettable painting shows a man's face literally disintegrating before our very eyes as a terrified woman looks on in disbelief. The image is haunting in its ghastly, gory detail: Elias depicts flesh literally being ripped asunder as teeth, skin and one eyeball fly off the hapless man's face in gruesome chunks—an unsparing depiction of disfigurement.

Elias delivered a nearly-identical mélange of mutilation with his cover for *Black Cat Mystery #50* ("White Heat" Jun 1954). Elias depicts another hapless soul who has accidentally come in contact with a tube of radium. The man's face and hands literally melt before our unbelieving eyes as skin, teeth and fingers drop off in flakes and chunks—revealing a stomach-turning blend of bare bone and burned, desiccated flesh. What is equally unnerving is that Elias leaves the top half of the man's skull intact—accentuating the contrast between the normal, untouched portion of the man's head and the nauseating mess made of the lower portion. Both of these Elias covers push the grue quotient past anything EC produced even in its heyday.

But Elias also balanced his style from the explicitly horrific to the darkly menacing. His cover for *Tomb of Terror #12* ("Tale of Cain" Nov 1953) depicts a monstrous zombie (with a face reminiscent of several Johnny Craig/Al Feldstein creations) about to burn a red-hot death's head branding iron into the face of a horrified victim. In the tradition of the

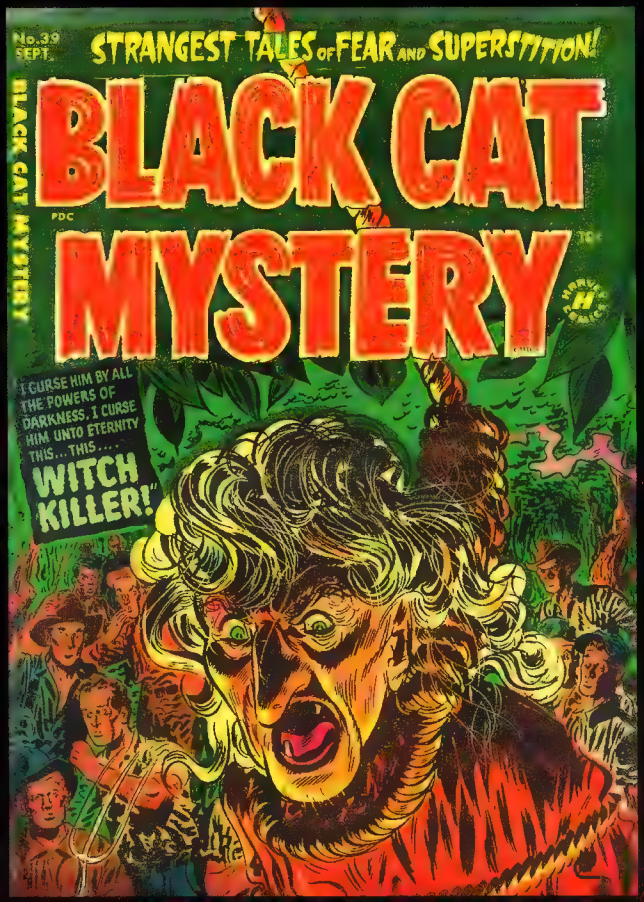
Tomb of Terror # 15 ("Breakup" Jan 1954).

Black Cat Mystery #50 ("White Heat" Jun 1954).

horror pulps, the cover's gore quotient is low, but the painting is laden with a sense of terror and impending doom. Note Elias' contrast between the red-yellow flames and the cool darkness that envelops the zombie's face! Elias employs the same sensibility for *Black Cat Mystery #39* ("Witch Killer!" Sep 1952), delivering an unnervingly tortuous study of a wild-eyed evil crone, her neck tightly embraced by a noose. The witch's twisted, demented expression, staring directly at *us*, rivals even the tortured visages of Graham Ingels' worst nightmares. The cover is also noteworthy for its detail: the witch's enraged, horrified face in the foreground; angry, pitchfork-wielding villagers in the background.

Similarly, for *Chamber of Chills #18* ("Haircut!" Mar 1953), Elias gives us a disfigured, bald headed monstrosity who's about to give a terrified customer some tonsorial torture. The straight razor held by the creature descends onto the poor victim's throat! Again, Elias' sense of detail is unmistakable: the creases in the barber chair and the folds in the apron that covers the victim both augment the intensity and realism of the unnerving scene. Elias' versatility allowed him to mix mood, mayhem and monsters with equal aplomb. His contribution to horror comic art cannot be overestimated.

In 1953, the great Don Heck (*Iron Man*) began a long and rewarding tenure as cover artist for Comic Media's *Horrific*. Heck began his work with *Horrific #3*. The book's first two covers were, in retrospect, masterworks of chaotic terror. Issue 1, for example, depicted a "Symphony of the Undead" with an orchestra of zombies, headed by its imposing undead conductor, leading a beautiful ballerina in a flaming "dance of death." Heck's covers for *Horrific* were stylistically different, characterized by huge, startling paintings of heads and faces in varying states of terror and disfigurement. Generally, these twisted visages would stare right back at us from the page—almost daring us to give up a dime for the horrors


No.39
SEPT.
STRANGEST TALES OF FEAR AND SUPERSTITION!
BLACK CAT MYSTERY
PDC
I CURSE HIM BY ALL THE POWERS OF DARKNESS. I CURSE HIM UNTO ETERNITY THIS... THIS.... WITCH KILLER!"

ABOVE: Black Cat Mystery #39 ("Witch Killer!" Sep 1952).
LEFT: Chamber of Chills #18 ("Haircut!" Mar 1953).

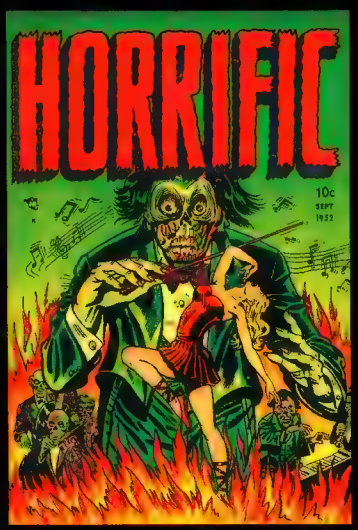
Tomb of Terror #12 ("Tale of Cain" Nov 1953)

Horrific #7 (Sep 1953).

awaiting us inside. A prime example is Heck's cover for *Horrific #3* (Jan 1953) depicting a horror-stricken man with a bullet hole through his forehead. What's truly arresting about Heck's painting is its sheer simplicity: the head alone is viewed, larger than life, and unadorned by anything else, including background, lettering or dialogue balloons. The victim's hair is standing on end, his eyes impossibly wide, his face unshaven, blood splattered near the bullet hole. Heck's eye for detail was equally arresting as we see every nuance of the man's terrified, grimacing face. Heck's stark, uncluttered imagery could just as easily adorn the cover of a crime comic or a Dime Detective pulp.

Horrific #3 (Jan 1953)

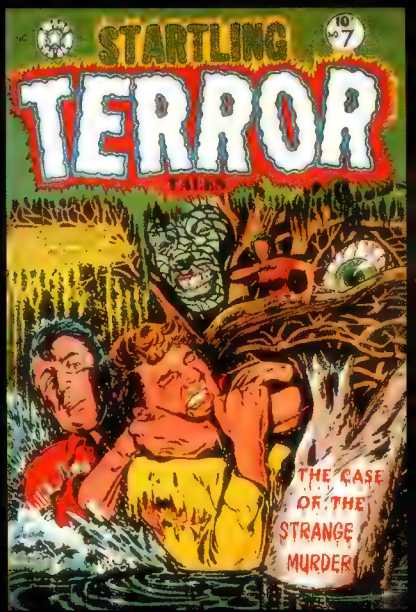
In fact, from #3 on Heck did all of *Horrific's* covers, and painted them in a similar, stark style. His cover for *Horrific #7* (Sep 1953) depicts another twisted, disembodied head about to meet a descending guillotine. This time, however, the victim's horrified visage shares cover space with the gleaming guillotine blade and a curious cityscape of buildings and full moon—as if the execution were occurring in the middle of a city block! As we view the cover, we're looking *up* at the larger than life guillotine, giving us a startling perspective on the height of the contraption and its *loooong* descent to the terrified victim far below. Heck's uncluttered, in-your-face style with terrified (and terrifying) faces is indeed a unique contribution to the art of horror comics.



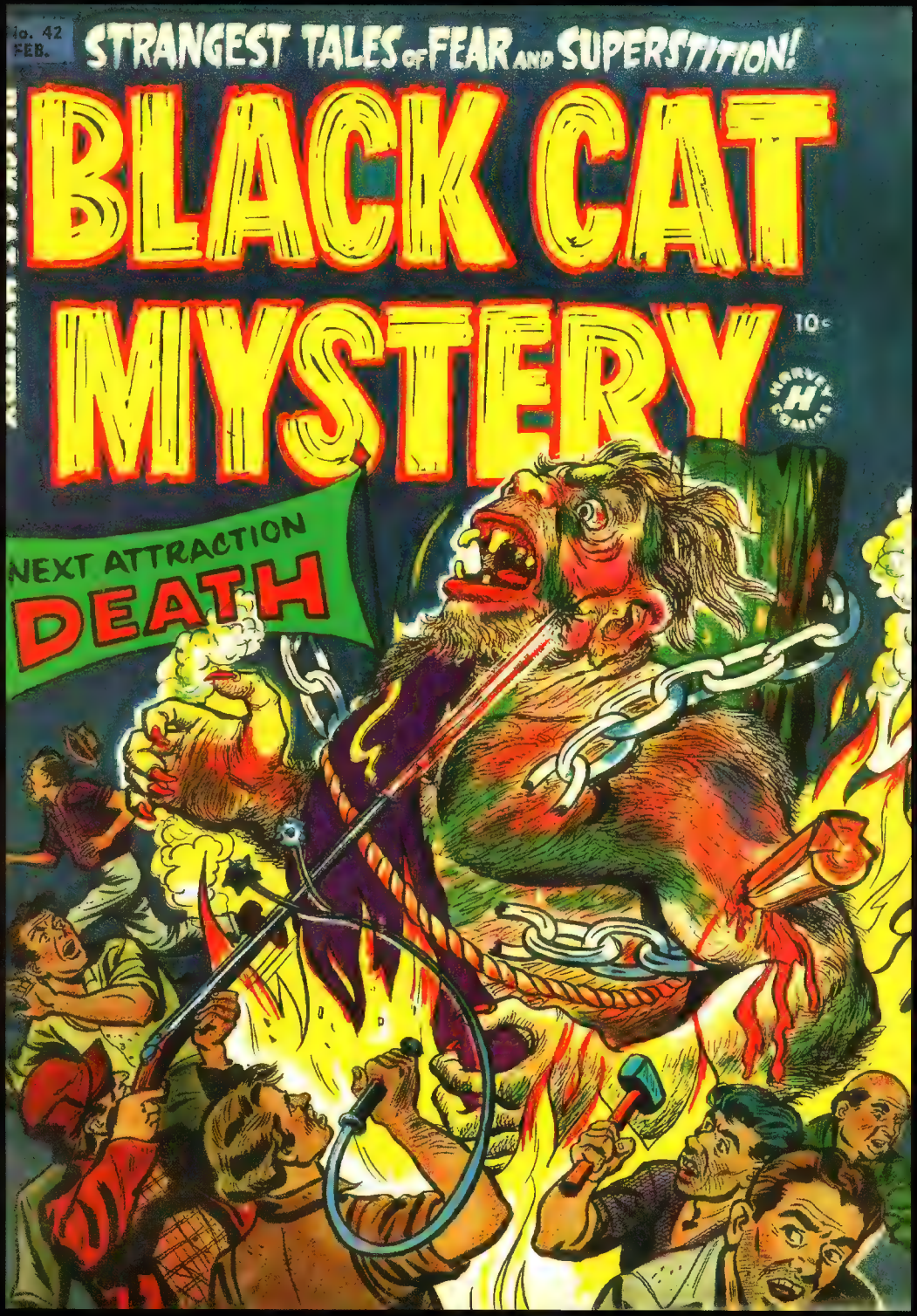
Horrific #1 "Symphony of the Undead."

In contrast, the great L.B. Cole's covers for Star's *Startling Terror Tales* were characterized by a blend of hallucinogenic images. The cover for *Startling #7* ("The Case of the Strange Murder" Jan 1954) gives us two hapless jungle explorers mired in a bog and being attacked by a wild-eyed, demonic creature. Both victims are painted in a realistic, natural style, and the scene is augmented by a dense undergrowth of trees, stumps and shrubbery, a terrified girl and—best of all—a huge, staring, bloodshot eye in the background! The painting is a fine example of Cole's ability to deliver both atmosphere *and* stark terror.

A vision of pure chaos was also the hallmark of the great Joe Simon. After Simon helped create *Captain America*, he delivered a superb horror cover for *Black Cat Mystery #42* ("Next Attraction: Death" Feb 1953). In a scene reminiscent of *King Kong* Simon depicts a captive, obviously-enraged monster breaking its shackles. The panicked crowd is seen alternately fleeing and attempting to stop the creature by impaling it, shooting it and



Startling Terror Tales #7 ("The Case of the Strange Murder" Jan 1954)



Black Cat Mystery #42 ("Next Attraction: Death" Feb 1953).

No.41
Dec.
STRANGEST TALES OF FEAR AND SUPERSTITION!
BLACK CAT MYSTERY
BLACK CAT
PDC
MYSTERY
HARVEY COMICS
10c
BLACK EVIL SWOOPS DOWN FROM THE OMINOUS SKIES...LOATHSOME CLAWS STRIKE OUT A TRAIL OF DEATH...HORROR RUNS BERSERK IN THE GHASTLY FORM OF THE.....
BEAST OF DOOM!

Black Cat Mystery #41 ("Beast of Doom" Dec 1952).

burning it. Simon's painting is a tableau of chaos: flames encircle the furious creature, amidst gun-toting, whip-wielding, would-be heroes.

Al Avison likewise mixed mood and monstrosity for his chilling cover to *Black Cat Mystery #41* ("Beast of Doom" Dec 1952). Avison delivers a hapless victim in the clutches of a huge, humanoid bat. Our hero desperately and determinedly clings to a tree atop a mountainside as the winged nightmare tries to go airborne with him. Below, Avison gives us a full view of what is obviously the creature's mountain top castle, as yet another smaller bat flies through the background. The painting, reliant more on atmosphere than sheer gore, is dominated by the black wings of the vampire, contrasted by the cover's yellow background, delivering a mix of menace and outright horror. Rarely has a comic book cover so closely matched the gothic ambience of Universal's 1930s horror films.

One "Brand X" horror book that consistently delivered unnerving, surreal and atmospheric covers was Harvey's *Chamber of Chills*. We watch a green, misshapen monster arise from a murky, sludge-filled swamp, overturning two victims in a canoe as Warren Kremer's cover for *Chamber #12* ("The Swamp Monster" Sep 1952) comes to life. We note Kremer's eye for detail and mood: the creature arises amidst a pitch-black sky and, in the foreground, a tiny swamp lizard stares impassively at the carnage created by the slimy creature. For *Chamber #13* ("The Lost Race"Oct 1952), the great Howard Nostrand and Bob

Chamber of Chills #12 ("The Swamp Monster" Sep 1952).

CHAMBER OF CHILLS
TALES OF TERROR AND SUSPENSE!
CHAMBER OF CHILLS
No.13
OCT.
10¢
WHAT ARE THE GROTESQUE TRICKS THAT TIME CAN PLAY ON EVOLUTION! CAN MAN BE PUSHED BACK ON THE PHYSICAL SCALE?
READ: THE LOST RACE

Chamber of Chills #13 ("The Lost Race"Oct 1952)

CHAMBER OF CHILLS
TALES OF TERROR AND SUSPENSE!
CHAMBER OF CHILLS
No.10 JULY
10¢ MAGAZINE
NOW PUBLISHED MONTHLY
"Tis strange but true; For truth is always strange, – Stranger than fiction."
Lord Byron
CRACK
CRUNCH!
THEIR BEATEN BODIES BLED FROM THE DRIVING POUNDING STORM. THEY WERE FORCED TO SEEK SHELTER IN...
THE CAVE OF DEATH!

Chamber #10 ("The Cave of Death" Jul 1952).

Chamber of Chills #23 (Oct 1954).

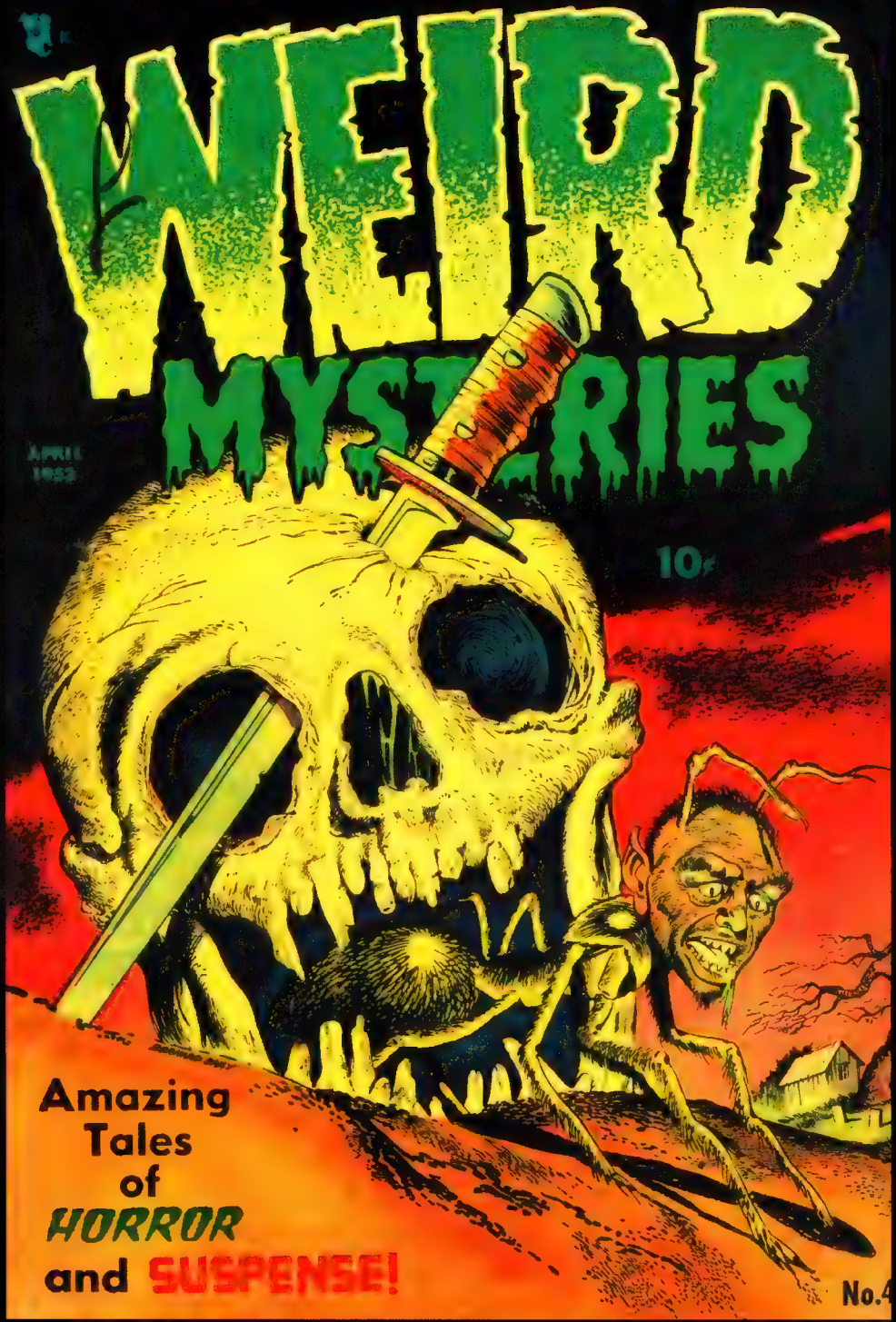
Weird Mysteries #2 (#1 was painted by the legendary Basil Wolverton and is one of Wolverton's finest and most unsettling efforts).

Powell depict two mummified, zombie-like beings arising from a concrete vault to attack an unfortunate archeologist. The painting's only concession to light is the victim's lantern, which illuminates the carnage and allows us to spy a couple of small lizards that have also crawled out of the defiled tomb. Like the covers created by Simon and Cole, Nostrand and Powell etch a picture that beautifully blends panic, horror and atmosphere.

Unfortunately, research failed to disclose the artists responsible for several other memorable *Chamber* covers. "The Cave of Death" from *Chamber* #10 (Jul 1952) gives us a monstrous head in the shape of an ice cave, ascending from the ground to swallow two terrified explorers. Icicles which form the creature's teeth are especially unnerving, and the entire scene marks one of the most eerily surreal covers in the history of horror comics. And the sheer pulpy delight of *Chamber* #23 (Oct 1954) is unmistakable: two deformed ghouls carry a beautiful, unconscious girl through a slimy chamber of horrors replete with the skeletal remains of past victims. (In a further nod to the horror pulps of the 1930s, one of the ghouls greedily eyes the blonde's diamond bracelet!) Of all the horror books of the 1950s, *Chamber of Chills* presented covers that were perhaps the most closely allied with the degenerate, shocking visions created by the pulps.

In addition to Lee Elias and Don Heck, the "Brand X" horror pantheon must also include Byron Bailey, whose covers for Gilmore's *Weird Mysteries* were among the most imaginative and horrific in the genre. Bailey began with *Weird Mysteries* #2 (#1 was painted by the legendary Basil Wolverton and is one of Wolverton's finest and most unsettling efforts). After #2, Bailey was *Weird Mysteries*' exclusive cover artist—and his work was marked by over-the-top gore, envelope-pushing sadism and the hellish visions of our worst nightmares.

For *Weird Mysteries* #4 (Apr 1953), Bailey depicted a



Weird Mysteries #4 (Apr 1953).

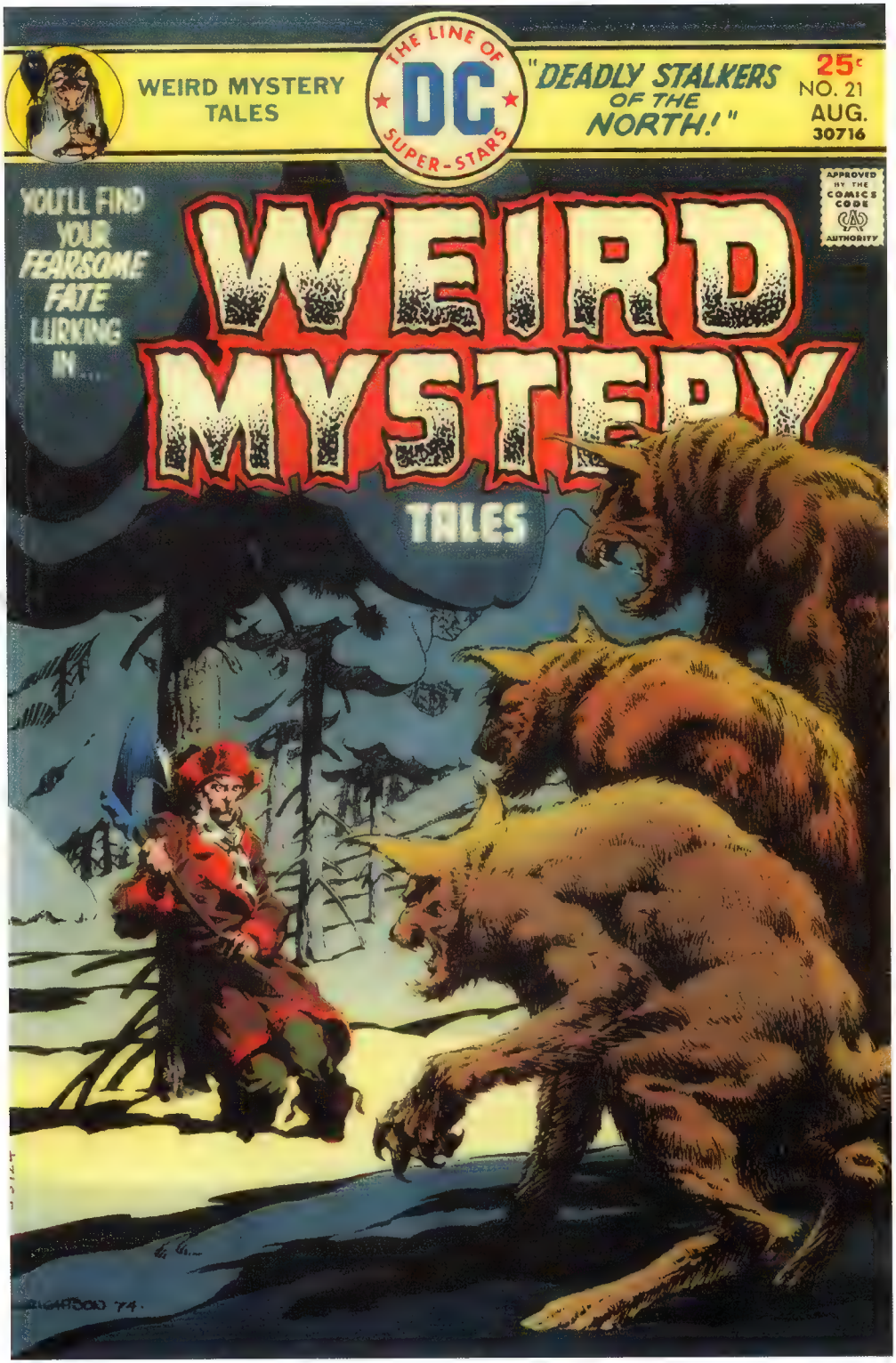
surreal, nightmarish vision: a huge insect with the drooling, antennaed head of a demonic fiend crawls out of a giant, desiccated skull. The eerie tableau is set against an orange-black sky with a twisted tree and a small graveyard in the background. Bailey's hellish insect is reminiscent of the classic "Zanti Misfits" *Outer Limits* TV episode). There isn't much gore here, but it's one of Bailey's most disturbingly imaginative works. *Weird Mysteries* #5 has Bailey delivering the ultimate foray into mad science. A mad doctor's hands reach into the exposed skull of a misshapen monster to remove the creature's brain. Electrodes and flashing lights complete a picture that makes Frankenstein's laboratory look like a child's nursery! Finally, Bailey's cover for *Weird Mysteries* #6 delivers a pair of gloved magician's hands pulling a bloody, freshly decapitated shrunken head from a top hat! Bailey juxtaposes the darkness of the hat and head with a yellow background, which outlines the shadow of the grisly scene—highlighting the sinister, menacing tone of the piece. Bailey's colorful, grisly covers for *Weird Mysteries* are haunting and unnerving. He could very well be labeled the Graham Ingels of "Brand X" horror. But while Ingels painted his characters with tortured countenances, Bailey's monsters leered and grinned, delighting in their diabolics!

Weird Mysteries #6 (Aug/Sep 1953)

Of course, this article is only a snapshot look at those comics that shared the horror market with EC. But the cover art for these alternative "Brand X" books is as rich with atmosphere, monstrosities and politically incorrect gore as anything created by Ingels, Craig or Feldstein. EC's brilliant combination of writing and art will always stand alone atop the horror genre. But when it came to *cover* art, "Brand X" certainly gave Bill Gaines and company a run for their money.

Weird Mystery Tales-DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #4 (Summer 1971) was the premiere issue of DC's oversized books as well as the first issue of this obscure Bronze Age horror series.

Weird Mystery Tales #1 (Aug 1972) This cover is a perfect example of why Mike Kaluta was one of DC's finest cover artists.



Weird Mystery Tales #21 (Aug 1974) Wrightson, werewolves, a big axe.

DC's Obscure Bronze Age HORROR Gem

by John R. Stuart

Collectors of Bronze Age horror comics tend to focus on DC and Marvel's industry-leading books. They search high and low for the "clearly established icons" of the genre such as *Weird War Tales*, *Ghosts*, *Monster of Frankenstein*, *Tomb of Dracula* and *Werewolf by Night*. By doing so they miss out on one of DC's best and most obscure horror series, *Weird Mystery Tales*, not to be confused with Gilmore's 1950s shock horror series *Weird Mysteries*.

Weird Mystery Tales first appeared as the premiere issue of the title that was to become the *80 Page Giant* of the '70s,. namely DC's *100 Page Super Spectacular*. The *80 Page Giant*s were the oversized 1960s issues that reprinted famous DC Golden Age classics, and the *100 Page Super Spectacular*s filled the same role in the Bronze Age.

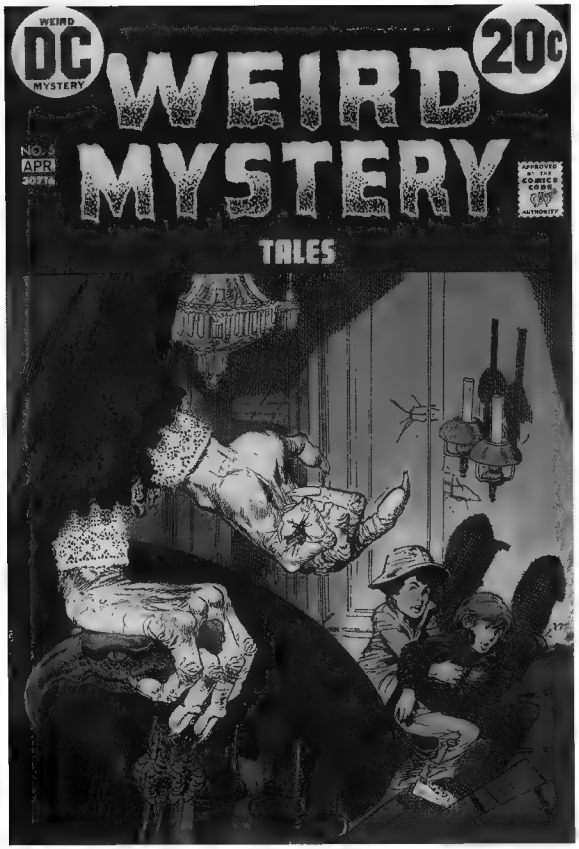
100 Page Super Spectacular #4 was the first comic book of the series and was featured as "100 shock pages of story and art from cover to cover." It didn't fail to fulfill this promise. *WMT* burst onto the newsstands in the summer of 1971 and featured an awesome black cover by Bernie Wrightson. It was an immediate success and DC rolled out 18 more issues and then incorporated the 100-pagers into most of their comic book runs, issuing a 100-page issue instead of a regular size book. Who could resist these 100-page monsters at three times the size of a regular comic book! They were a bargain even at 50 cents a copy! These triple-size books are now proving to be very popular with collectors and are some of the more difficult Bronze Age comics to find.

Bronze Age expert Tony Starks lists DC *100 Page Super Spectacular* #4 as number twelve on his Bronze Age scarcity list (see *Overstreet's Fan* #24, page 177). I believe the scarcity of this book can be attributed to DC's note on the inside of the front cover. The back cover of this book repeated the superb art of the front cover and the publisher actually recommended, "SPECIAL! CUT OUT THE BACK COVER AND USE IT AS A WALL POSTER" Is it any wonder that few copies of this book survived?

DESTINY:
MEN HAVE CALLED MY NAME FOR COUNTLESS EONS. THEY HAVE SEARCHED THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD FOR ME. THEY HAVE DEFIED THE FORCES OF THE UNKNOWN. THE REALMS OF THE DARK MYSTICS IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS THEY CANNOT POSSESS.
MY NAME IS DESTINY, AND IT IS MY FATE TO WALK ALONE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY AND OBSERVE THE FOLLIES AND MYSTERIES OF MANKIND, AND TO NOTE THEM ALL IN THE COSMIC LOG.
HOROSCOPE PHENOMENON OR WITCH QUEEN OF ANCIENT SUMERIA?
PISCES-- THE FISH WAS THE BIRTH SYMBOL OF KENNETH LANDRY, A DEEP BELIEVER IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE STARS AND PLANETS ON THE LIFE PATTERNS OF INDIVIDUALS! OF FOUR SPECTACULAR CASES, HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE TIME-LOST VISION WAS THE FIRST TO GAIN ATTENTION!!

Weird Mystery Tales #1 (Aug 1972) page 1 splash panel sparkles with the combined art of Jack Kirby and Berni Wrightson.

DC then forgot about *WMT* and launched its renaissance of horror, beginning its domination of the genre with such books as *Weird War Tales*, *Weird Western Tales*, *Ghosts*, *Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love*, and many others. But somewhere in the back of Carmine Infantino's mind there must have lurked a memory of that great first issue of the *100 Page Super Spectacular*s because he resurrected *Weird Mystery Tales* in the summer of 1972 and re-launched the series as a bi-monthly. It took until issue 17 to become a monthly and lasted until



issue 24 (Nov 1975).

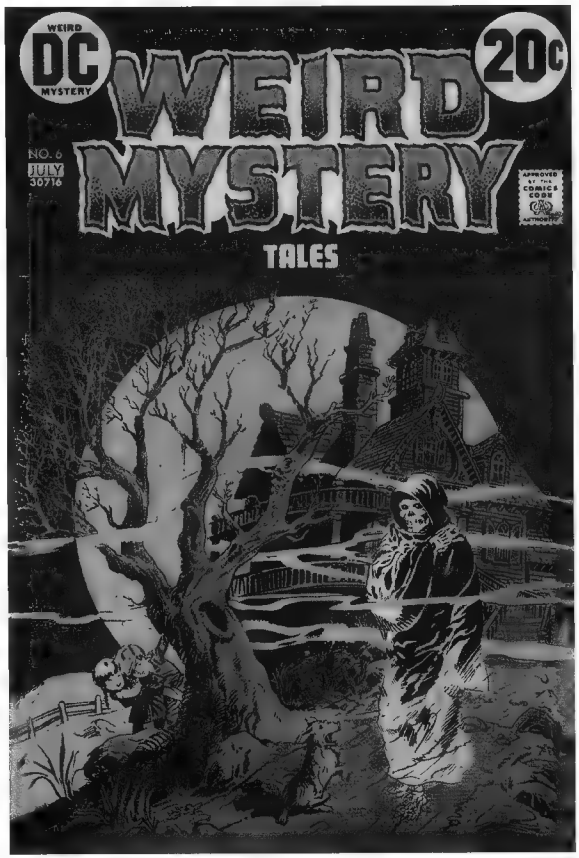
The best way to describe *Weird Mystery Tales* is to call it an eclectic mix of the macabre, the supernatural, monsters, demons, out-of-body experiences and virtually everything that was both weird and mysterious. DC brilliantly took every type of bizarre story that didn't quite fit into one of its mainstream horror books and let it flower in the hard-to-define *Weird Mystery Tales*.

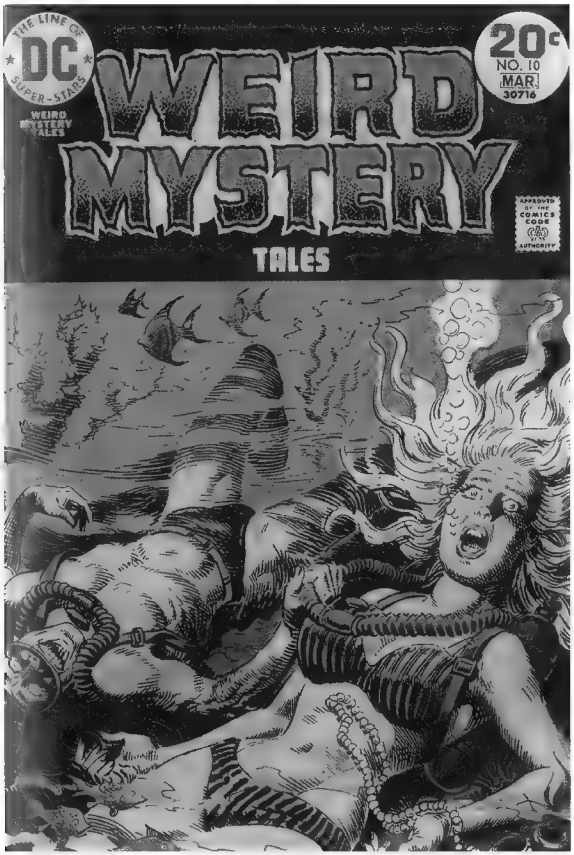
The Oxford dictionary defines the word weird as "supernatural, uncanny, unearthly, queer, odd, old fashioned, strange and incomprehensible." This, combined with the definition of mystery as "hidden or inexplicable matter" makes for a potent horror brew.

DC already had a defined market place for most of its horror stories with its two big books, *Weird War Tales* and *Ghosts*. They then added *Weird Western Tales* and *Weird Mystery Tales* in the summer of 1972. *Weird Western* had a lock on the western genre which left *Weird Mystery* to cover the regular, non-categorized horror stories.

But the origins of *Weird Mystery Tales* are more cloudy than to assume the book was just an addition to DC's line of weird books. The real origin of *Weird Mystery Tales* is documented in the letters page of issues 3 and 5. *Weird Mystery Tales* was created from the left-over art and stories from the failed DC magazine *Spirit World*. *Spirit World* #1 was the only issue of this eerie magazine, which appeared in the fall of 1971. The financial failure of *Spirit World* meant that DC was left with art and stories and no book to print them in. Seeing the success of their other horror books, DC quickly developed *Weird Mystery* to both utilize its scraps from *Spirit World* and provide a venue for mainline horror.

Weird Mystery Tales quickly developed into a standard-format DC horror comic along the lines of *House of Secrets* or *House of Mystery*. Each issue contained two or three stories, perhaps a short filler and a letters page called "The Cosmic Log." Hosted by the dark, brooding, mysterious Destiny, the book quickly provided a marvelous mix of eerie and thought-provoking horror stories. Destiny was not DC's normal comic book host. Instead of corny wit and wisecracks like those provided by Caine and Abel, or Eve, he was always serious. This was clearly a change of format for DC. Unfortunately it didn't last and Destiny was joined by Eve, the jocular witch, in issue 9 and eventually displaced by her with issue 15. But it's hard to kill a good host and Destiny reappeared in May 1975 as the co-host of *Secrets of Haunted House.*





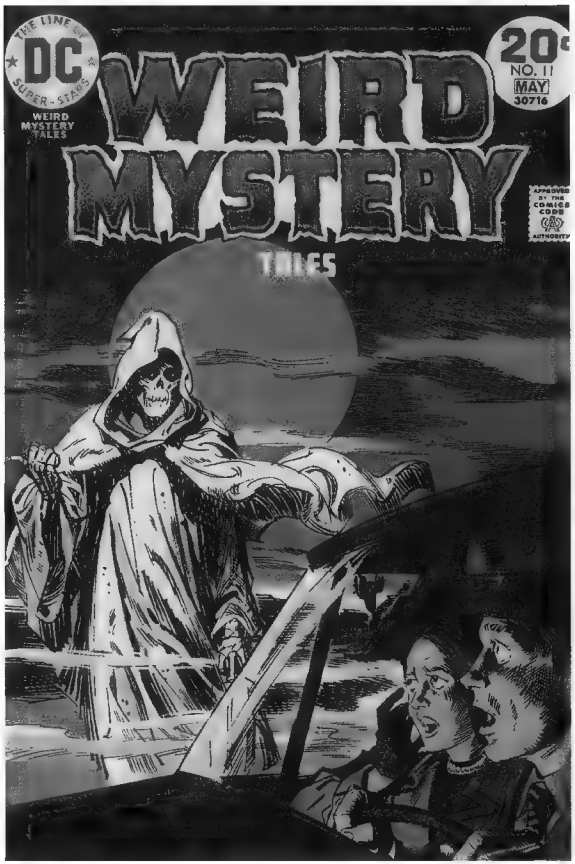
Destiny was the quintessential horror book host. His macabre appearance and serious, sinister speeches gave *Weird Mystery Tales* an evil, uncanny atmosphere that was matched by the comic's contents. His introduction to the Cosmic Log in issue 4 is a perfect example of his somber influence:

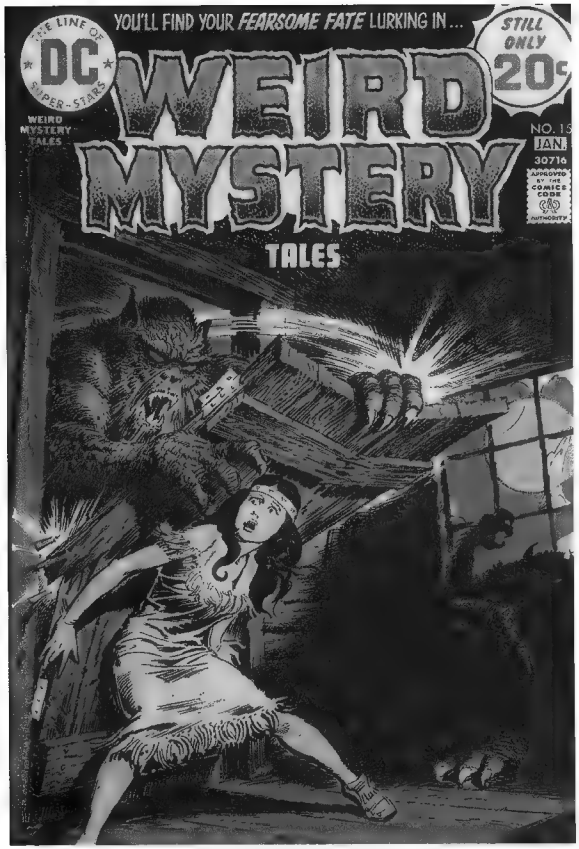
> *I have walked the corridors of evil. I have seen disease and death. No evil escapes my eternal gaze...for that is my Destiny...to watch...to observe...and to listen. I record all I hear in my Cosmic Log. And then, when darkness comes, my tales are told. Listen gentle readers, innocents of the hideous world without...listen...*

Destiny was the creation of Bernie Wrightson and Marv Wolfman and made his first appearance on the splash page of issue 1. This comic also featured some of DC's finest artists and writers. The work of Jack Kirby sparkled in the first three issues and then the artistic talents of Alfred Alcala, Nestor Redondo, Jess Jodloman, Ruben Yandoc, Wally Wood and Mike Kaluta were featured, to name only a few. Outstanding cover art was also a constant with *Weird Mystery Tales*, but the comic book's strongest feature was its superb, thought-provoking writing. The lion's share of the stories was produced by Jack Oleck, Steve Skeates and Robert Kanigher, who is best known for his war story scripts. The early issues also contained some interesting stories by the comic master himself, Jack Kirby. But what was it that made the stories so good? Perhaps it was simply the diverse eclectic type of story that the editors, Joe Orlando, Tex Blaisdell and E. Nelson Bridwell, picked for this series. The editors did a marvelous job of living up to the comic book's title, and they sought out stories that were both weird and mysterious. Using a variety of horror and mystery stories they turned out a product that offered a wide variety of both horror classics and supernatural themes. In short, readers of *Weird Mystery Tales* never knew what awaited them in each issue.

While nearly every one of these stories is a gem, I think it only fair to offer a detailed snapshot of a story by each of the four major writers, so here are four of my favorites from *Weird Mystery Tales*.

The first gem is by the great Jack Kirby from issue 1, "Horoscope Phenomenon" or "Witch Queen of Ancient Sumeria." In this Kirby classic Ken Landry, a police detective, has a strange dream involving a female vision of the horoscope sign Pisces. The vision portrays her offering him a telephone receiver which turns into a gun. He remembers this dream during a shoot-out between the police and a mentally deranged man. Landry rushes into a nearby house and telephones the lunatic,

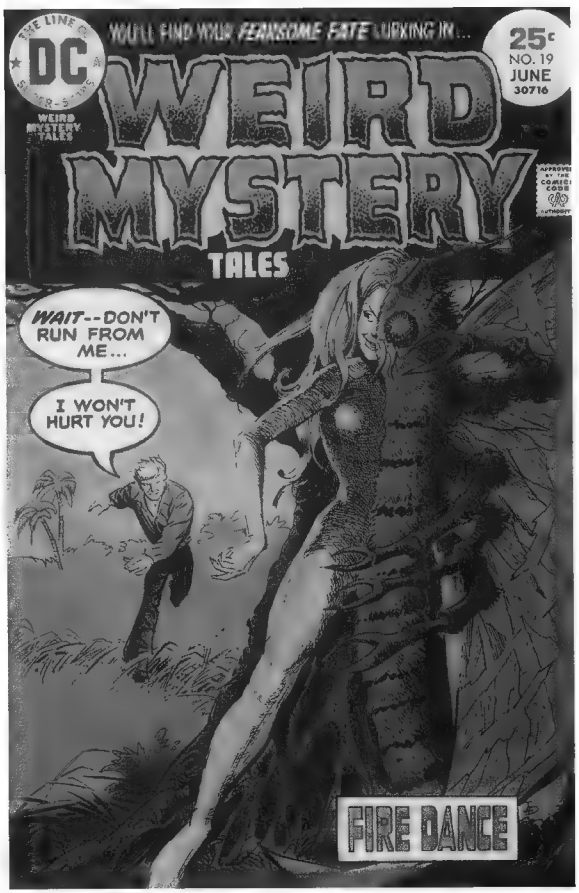


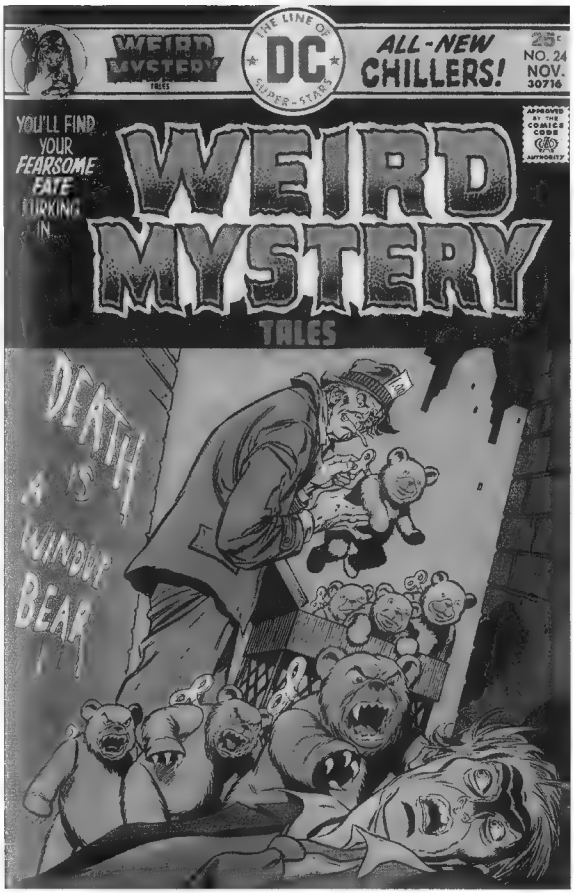


distracting him long enough to allow his capture. The second encounter is the same apparition now in the form of Cancer the Crab. The Crab helps a young woman to find a priceless treasure in an inherited house. The sale of this treasure ensures her future happiness with her new husband. Virgo is the next horoscope goddess to appear. Virgo saves a vacationing writer from death when she awakens him just before a rock slide. All these encounters are chronicled by an archeologist researching an ancient Sumerian temple where an astrological based religion was born. Each of these astrological visions was nearly identical to the ritual face mask he found in the ancient temple. This story is a double treat, featuring both the art and writing talents of Jack Kirby.

Next is a great story from issue 4 by Steve Skeates entitled "The Devil to Pay." A wealthy elderly man named Philip Burton is obsessed with finding a youth potion. He has traveled to the mountains of Hungary in his quest only to be disappointed once again. The alchemist he has come to see has no cure for him. As he leaves a terrible storm begins and his limo is wrecked, killing his driver. Burton is unhurt and seeks help at an ancient monastery. Initially the monks turn him away but he convinces them to let him spend the night. During the night he hears someone calling for help and discovers a young man locked in a cell. The prisoner tells Burton that the monks think he is the Devil and will not release him. The monks stop Burton from unlocking the cell and explain that their order has guarded the Evil One for three centuries. In the morning Burton leaves and then returns to the cell. He agrees to release the prisoner for a price—to become young and immortal. The prisoner agrees and Burton unbolts the door, instantly the prisoner is transformed into Satan. Satan grants Burton his wish and disappears. Burton blacks out and when he awakens he finds himself transformed into a young man, full of life and immortality. The irony is that in granting Burton's wish Satan exchanged bodies with him and then locked Burton in the cell. Burton, who is now immortal, has been condemned to spend his immortality locked away by the diligent monks.

"Checkmate" by Robert Kanigher (based upon a John Jacobson idea) is an excellent showcase for Kanigher's skills. He weaves a quirky tale of two men who meet every night to play chess. They have been matching wits for twenty years and every game has ended in a draw. The two chess players are very different. Deacon is a kind, decent, polite man who loves horses. His opponent, Squire Kent, is a gruff, unpleasant man who treats his horse roughly. As usual Deacon and Kent play, but for the

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DEATH IS A WINDUP BEAR!

first time the game doesn't end in a draw. Deacon makes checkmate with his black knight. In a rage Kent draws his pistol and murders Deacon and makes it look as if the murder was committed by a robber. Deacon lies dead across the chess board, the black knight which won the game and cost him his life still clutched in his hand. Outside, Kent is about to make good his escape when he is attacked by a jet black horse. The horse stomps Kent to death. In the morning the police and servants are puzzled by the course of events. Kent is found dead at the feet of his white horse, yet there is no trace of blood on the gentle horse's hooves. Inside they find Deacon's body and from the black knight in his hand drips the blood of Kent. The chess piece has avenged his master's murder. A great story with superb art by Nestor Redondo in issue 9.

Rounding out our quartet of stories is "Island of the Damned" by Jack Oleck from issue 11. A poor but beautiful gypsy girl named Irena plans to marry the rich yet deformed Count Phillipe. It will be a marriage of treachery and murder as she is actually in love with the dangerous Corvino. Count Phillipe lives on a secluded island and has turned his home into a haven for countless freaks of nature. He himself is deformed with a hunched back, yet is pure of heart. Irena successfully seduces Phillipe and wins his heart. However, the price of her love is harsh. She demands that the Count banish all the freaks from his island. He finally succumbs and sends them away. Phillipe and Irena prepare to leave for their wedding. But on the beach Irena's lover Corvino brutally attacks Phillipe and kills him by smothering him with a bag over his head. They leave the Count and return to the castle to steal Phillipe's treasure, but on the beach they find their boat smashed and Phillipe's body gone. At this moment a boulder is dropped from above and crushes Corvino. Irena returns to the castle and finds Count Phillipe alive and sitting in the darkness. She screams her hatred and loathing at him as she expects him to now kill her for her treachery. Phillipe laughs and reminds her that she promised to love him no matter what he was and that he still plans to marry her. He stands up and she sees that in reality he had no hunched back. His lump was actually a second head. When they smothered him they only killed his first head which now hangs grotesquely, tongue lolling out. She screams as she realizes the horror that awaits her on the "Island of the Damned."

It would be unfair not to mention some of the other intriguing stories contained in this series. Other tales with great merit include, "Hell Hath no Fury" in #18, "Fire Dance" from #19, "The Friedman's Monster" and "The Veil of Death," both in #20, and "The Strange Ones," a take-off on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in #24.

In the long run *Weird Mystery Tales*' main strength—its eclectic, diverse stories—proved to be its weakness. Without a strong identifiable theme such as westerns, war or ghost stories, *Weird Mystery Tales* began to lose appeal on the newsstands. DC canceled the series after issue 24 in November 1975. The other DC horror giants continued to prosper, with *Weird War Tales* lasting until 1983, a run of 124 issues. *Ghosts* was canceled in 1982 after 112 issues and *Weird Western Tales* completed a 70-issue run in 1980.

Weird Mystery Tales' last claim to fame was its inclusion in issue 2 of *Cancelled Comic Cavalcade* in the fall of 1978. This 532-page book contained Xeroxed copies of canceled DC titles, only 35 copies were produced. The un-used covers for *Weird Mystery Tales* #25 and #26 by Joe Orlando and Mike Kaluta were included in this unusual publication. Kaluta's cover was eventually used for the cover of *House of Mystery* #265 and Orlando's art became the cover for *Secrets of the Haunted House* #20.

Collector interest in this unusual title is quite strong now, and while a complete run is still relatively inexpensive, finding high grade copies tends to be a challenge. So, for great covers and interior art combined with thought provoking stories try *Weird Mystery Tales*, a great if short-lived DC classic.

Sources: The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide *#27. Special thanks to Matt Nelson for his assistance with the checklist.*

WEIRD MYSTERY TALES CHECKLIST

DC 100 Page Super Spectacular

#4 (Summer 1971), Cover: Demon sits on body inside pentagram.

I Was the Last Man on Earth, 6 pages
The Phantom Enemy, 6 pages
I Fought the Clocks of Doom, 8 pages
The Witches Candles, 6 pages
I Was Lost in a Mirage, 8 pages
Horror in the Lake, 8 pages
The Haunters From Beyond, 8 pages
I Was the Last Martian, 8 pages
I Hunted the World's Wildest Animals, 8 pages
The City of Three Dooms, 6 pages
Jungle Boy of Jupiter, 8 pages
The Mysterious Mr. Omen, 6 pages

Superb back cover by Bernie Wrigthson, as well as four splash pages. Several funny fillers by Sergio Aragones.

Weird Mystery Tales #1-24

#1 (Aug 1972) Cover: Hands emerging from floor threaten girl in wheelchair.

Witch Queen, 10 pages
The Brothers Beaumont, 13 pages
Special Delivery (text)

Excellent Kirby art..

#2 (Oct 1972), Cover: Sinking Titanic with ghost in background.

Toxl, the World Killer, 12 pages
Titanic, 10 pages
They're Still Up There (text)

Great gray tone cover.

#3 (Dec 1972), Cover: Apparition threatens screaming woman.

The Burners, 10 pages
I Know Your Future, 5 pages
The Wizard's Gift, 8 pages,
reprint from *House of Mystery* #95

#4 (Feb 1973), Cover: Tentacles interrupt cat burglar.

The Devil to Pay, 8 pages
The Secret of Bat Island, 3 pages
The Hotel, 2 pages
To Live Forever, 8 pages

Nice Yandoc art.

#5 (Apr 1972), Cover: Taloned hand beckons to children.

Will You Listen, 9 pages
Legacy of the Damned, 8 pages
Dream House, 6 pages

#6 (Jul 1973), Cover: Old dark house and skeletal spectral figure.

The Chosen One, 8 pages
Even the Dead Shall Laugh, 7 pages
Third Eye, 7 pages

Originally produced for **Weird Mystery Tales** #25, this cover by Joe Orlando was published in the **Cancelled Comic Cavalcade** and later was published as the cover of **Secrets of Haunted House** #20.

#7 (Sep 1973), Cover: Terror-struck man is attacked by spectral hands.

Widow of Doctor Kaiogi, 10 pages
If This Boy is but to Live, 10 pages

#8 (Nov 1973), Cover: Young girl discovers monsters.

Final Take, 7 pages
Portrait of Terror, 5 pages
An Evil Pair, 8 pages

Excellent black cover.

#9 (Jan 1974), Cover: Smiling boy watches monster attack father.

Vampire's Gold, 6 pages
Checkmate, 6 pages
Evil Power, 8 pages

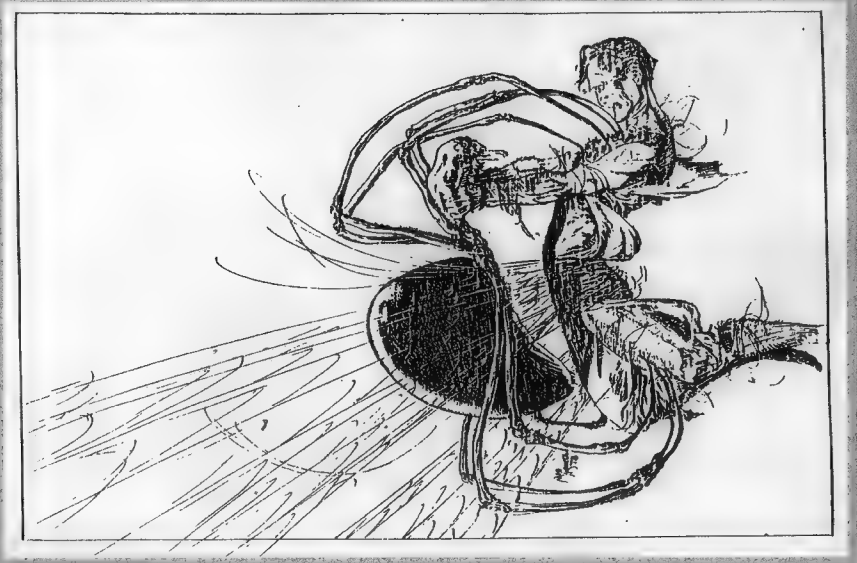
Great Redondo artwork.

#10 (Mar 1974), Cover: Drowning scuba divers.

The Curse, 7 pages
Lady Killer, 5 pages
Sunken Pearls of Captain Hatch, 8 pages

Beautiful cover by J. Jodloman(?).

The unpublished cover art of **Weird Mystery Tales** #26 appeared in the **Cancelled Comic Cavalcade** and later became the cover of **House of Mystery** #265 (Feb 1979).



#11 (May 1974), Cover: Couple stops to pick up hitchhiking ghost.
Island of the Damned, 10 pages
The Child is the Father of the Man, 3 pages
The Root of This Evil Curse, 7 pages

#12 (Jul 1974), Cover: Woman entertains guest with husband's preserved body in next room.
To Sleep, Perchance to Die, 7 pages
Till Death Do Us Part, 7 pages
Time Plug, 6 pages

#13 (Sep 1974), Cover: Ghost floats over casket.
Come Share My Coffin, 8 pages
His Master's Voice, 5 pages
Search for a Werewolf, 7 pages

#14 (Nov 1974), Cover: Giant vampire bat chases beautiful girl.
Blind Child's Bluff, 5 pages
The Price, 8 pages
Flight into Fright, 6 pages
Classic horror cover.

#15 (Jan 1975), Cover: Indian maid tries to keep werewolf out of the house.
Doom on Vampire Mountain, 8 pages
Drive-in Death, 6 pages
Blood Moon, 6 pages
Excellent Jodloman art.

#16 (Mar 1975), Cover: Children watch as a living scarecrow kills man.
Curse of the Fool Moon, 8 pages
The Witches' Way, 6 pages
Neely's Scarecrow, 6 pages

#17 (Apr 1975), Cover: Alligator in tattered man's clothing.
Magic by Moonlight Only, 5 pages
Satan's Revenge, 8 pages
The Hanging Man, 4 pages

#18 (May 1975), Cover: Sea serpent sinks ship.
Return of the Serpent, 8 pages
Feline Feast, 2 pages
Hell Hath No Fury, 7 pages
Great Yandoc art.

#19 (Jun 1975), Cover: Woman turns into moth.
Fire Dance, 8 pages
Flight, 4 pages
Death Calling, 6 pages
Excellent art by Abe Ocampo.

#20 (Jul 1975), Cover: Monster breaks out of chain-bound crate.
The Veil of Death, 6 pages
Baker's Dozen, 6 pages
The Friedman's Monster, 5 pages

#21 (Aug 1975), Cover: Woodsman faces werewolves.
Deadly Stalkers of the North, 7 pages
One Man's Poison, 4 pages
Dead Man's Gold, 6 pages
Great Wrightson cover.

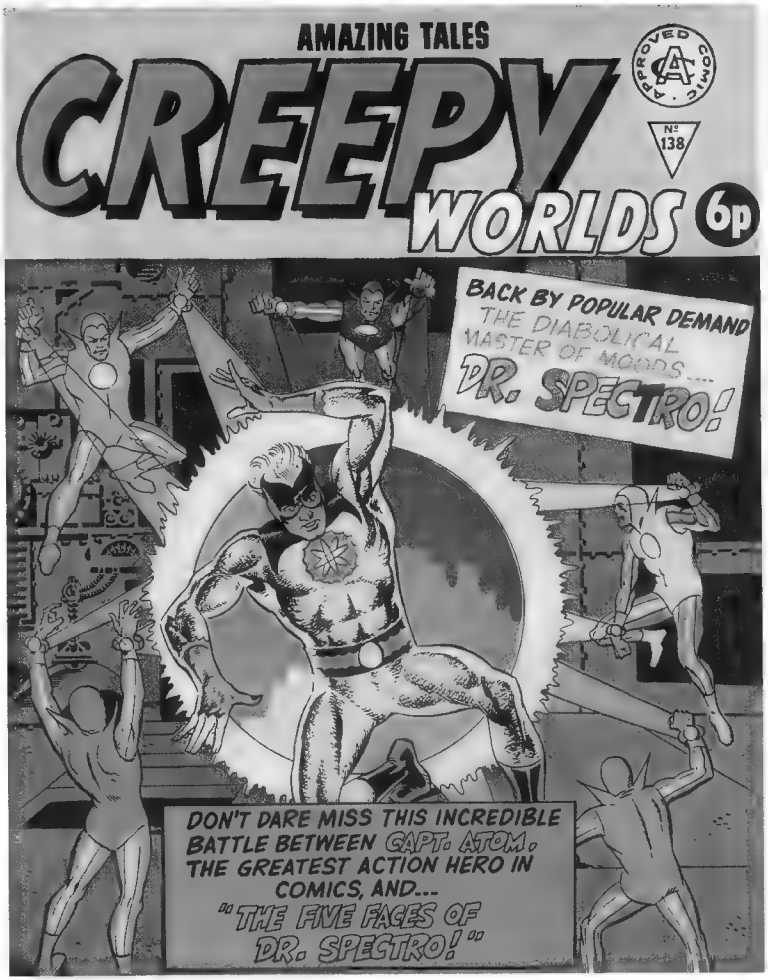
#22 (Sep 1975), Cover: Man is used as a rabbit and pursued by demon greyhounds.
A Death at the Races, 9 pages
A Reckoning in Eden, 2 pages
Meet My Murderer, 6 pages

#23 (Oct 1975), Cover: Man hangs from witch's broom high above city.
The Quiz Show, 10 pages
Fair Exchange, 8 pages
Wally Wood artwork.

#24 (Nov 1975), Cover: Terrifying mechanical teddy bears attack man.
Death is a Wind-up Bear, 10 pages
The Strange Ones, 8 pages

ALAN CLASS COMICS

by Chris Bonham


AMAZING TALES
CREEPY WORLDS
APPROVED COMIC
No 138
6p
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND
THE DIABOLICAL MASTER OF MINDS....
DR. SPECTRO!
DON'T DARE MISS THIS INCREDIBLE BATTLE BETWEEN CAPT. ATOM, THE GREATEST ACTION HERO IN COMICS, AND...
"THE FIVE FACES OF DR. SPECTRO!"

Creepy Worlds. *Sinister Tales*. *Secrets of the Unknown*. Fun titles, right? They sound a lot like the "fake" comic books found in an episode of *The Simpsons* or in a movie. But these *are* actual titles to actual comic books, some of which numbered well into the 200s. So how is it possible that hardly anyone has heard of these comics?

Admittedly, that question is a wee bit melodramatic. If you lived in the United Kingdom between 1960 and 1989, you probably have very fond memories of these aforementioned comics (as well as a dozen or so more with similarly provocative titles) that appeared at local newsstands. But the publisher, Alan Class & Co. Ltd., is virtually unknown to those outside of Great Britain. And history needs to take note of Alan Class, not only for his prolific 30-year career in comic book publishing, but even more significant is that he was the first to introduce many of today's cultural icons such as Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four to the British audience.

Born in London in 1937, Alan Class worked as an estate agent before setting up an import business for American film, detective and romance magazines in 1959. By 1962, he had begun publishing his own comic books, all of which consisted of material from American comics of the '50s, and eventually the 1960s and beyond.

In addition to *Creepy Worlds*, *Sinister Tales* and *Secrets of the Unknown*, Class's core six titles rounded out with *Suspense*, *Uncanny Tales* and *Astounding Stories*. All of which initially showcased horror and science fiction stories from Atlas, American Comics Group, and Charlton (including Fawcett inventory). There were other short-lived titles like *Blazing Trails*, *Tales of the Underworld* and *Out of This World*. These probably didn't last long because western and crime comics were on the way out, and, in the case of the latter book, Class had plenty of sci-fi in his core books.

Ironically, a sci-fi book entitled *Weird Planets* didn't last long either, which is too bad considering that in the early '60s, American comics were still prevented from using the word "Weird" on comic book covers by order of the Comics Code Authority. Not the case in the UK, of course, but still the same end result.

And Class was not limited to genre anthology titles. He attempted a *Dennis the Menace* series, but that only lasted ten issues. Upon reflection, Dennis was never really a menace, and perhaps the UK audience saw right through this misrepresentation. Thirty years later, they would appreciate a true "menace to society," in the form of Bart Simpson.

But those six main titles are where the focus should be concentrated. Class

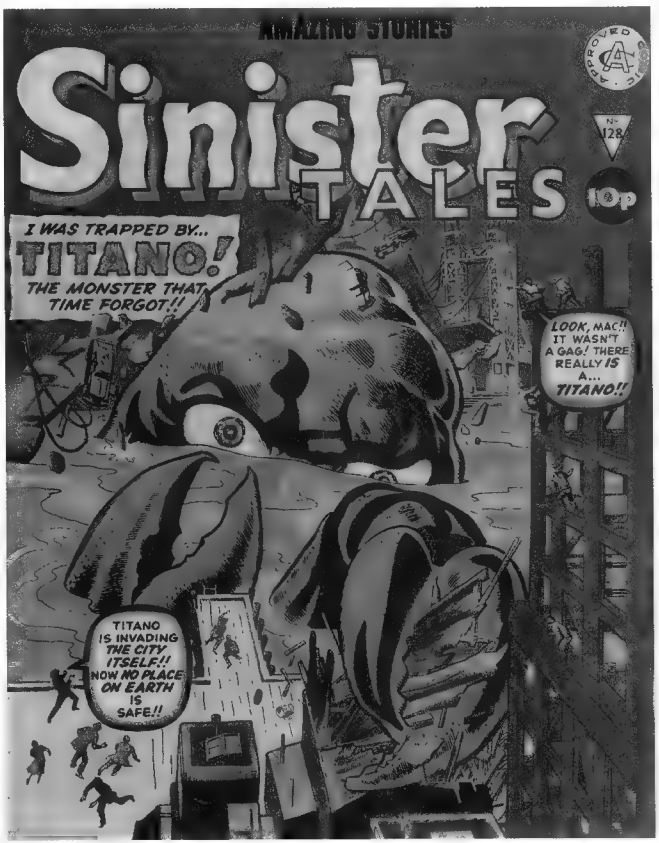
published between four and six titles a month, rotating his main six. Each square bound issue consisted of between 48 and 68 black.and white pages, with the occasional 100-page spectacular thrown in randomly. Price per issue ranged from 1 pence (the equivalent of 3 pennies!) in 1962 to 30 pence in the late '80s. Cover prices of the 100-pagers went as high as 55 pence (about 85 cents) and these often had thicker cardstock covers. Aside from the 100 pages, the covers were slick and the interior paper was cheap off-white stock similar to American pulps.

Exactly when the first issue hit the stands is difficult to pin down. There is no copyright information to speak of, and often issues are unnumbered. The only information, if there was any at all, is in the indicia which contained only the publisher's and printer's addresses. All signs point to the comics initially being published in 1962. (The Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections Division cites *Creepy Worlds* #2 as being an August 1962 issue and *Secrets of the Unknown* beginning with issue 1 in October 1962.)

The stories reprinted were a random mixture of post-Code horror and sci-fi as well as lots of Atlas monster classics. Even some pre-Code horror snuck in from time to time as seen in *Sinister Tales* #154 which contains Doug Wildey's "It Came From Nowhere" from *Marvel Tales* #126 (Aug 54). A typical issue would reprint the cover of an Atlas, Charlton, or ACG comic book and definitely include the interior story that matched the cover. From there, a few of the stories could be from that same issue, but usually it was just a random mix.

A single issue might have as many as eight Steve Ditko stories. It's a lot of fun to see both his Marvel and Charlton work back to back. You'll also find artwork from one or more of the following in almost every issue: Reed Crandall, Bernie Krigstein, Wally Wood, John Romita, Joe Maneely, Russ Heath, Joe Orlando, Jerry Robinson, Bill Everett, Gray Morrow and someone named Jack Kirby. Many of the stories reprinted in the Alan Class books were *never* reprinted in the United States.

And here's a tip for editors of future reprint material, if you can't find originals or stats of this sort of material, try and find these Alan Class books. They are in black and white, shot from stats of the original—you won't need to worry about color removal or "Theakstonization."


AMAZING STORIES
Sinister TALES
No. 128
10p
I WAS TRAPPED BY..
TITANO!
THE MONSTER THAT TIME FORGOT!!
LOOK, MAC!! IT WASN'T A GAG! THERE REALLY IS A... TITANO!!
TITANO IS INVADING THE CITY ITSELF!! NOW NO PLACE ON EARTH IS SAFE!!

Around 1965, Marvel's Silver Age heroes were in full swing in America, and Class began reprinting those stories as well. Again randomly, and interspersed with the other genre stories already being published. And it wasn't necessarily because Class knew a good thing when he saw it. He had a deal with Marvel to reprint their stories and the super-heroes just happened to be part of their catalog now. He may be a pioneer by accident, but a pioneer nonetheless.

Out of This World, another sci-fi title that didn't last, ran just over 30 issues spread across two volumes. That title became the first magazine in Britain to publish Spider-Man. Spidey's origin and first appearance from *Amazing Fantasy* #15 appears in *Out of This World* (1st Series) #17.

However, this was not the first super-hero to appear in a Class publication. Charlton's sci-fi hero, Captain Atom, started appearing quite regularly starting with *Astounding Stories* #2 (1962).

But these two Ditko (co-)creations either weren't popular enough to appear monthly or Class just couldn't get enough super-hero material to publish these super-heroes every month. I suspect the latter. There is one instance, however, where at least six of the first 8 issues of *Fantastic Four* appeared as the cover story in consecutive issues of *Creepy Worlds* #33-38. This consistency was kind of an anomaly as specific heroes did not remain in a single Class publication, but jumped from book to book. Subsequent issues of *Creepy Worlds* featured cover stories from Antman, Daredevil, Iron Man, The Avengers, The Human Torch, and even Spider-Man.

These appearances by Marvel super-heroes all predate 1967, the year Marvel really started to market their brand and characters in the UK by licensing their heroes specifically to World Distribution in a series of hardcover annuals starting with the 1967 *Marvel Storybook*. World, and its subdivision Grandreams, continued to publish these annuals all through the '70s, '80s and '90s. These annuals were all about Marvel. The Marvel logo and/or the name of the specific super-hero appearing within the book are prominently displayed and all the content was from Marvel.

While the Class titles showcased many Marvel heroes on their covers, emphasis was still placed on the series title. So, unless the word "Avengers" appeared below the title on the original American comic that was being reprinted by Class, there was no mention of The Avengers on the cover of that Class comic book. For example, *Creepy Worlds* #67 reprinted the cover and full story of *Avengers* #6. The title, "The Avengers," is replaced with the "Creepy Worlds" title. The remaining cover copy does not mention The Avengers at all. So some readers could have thought they were buying the latest reprint of the American comic book, "Zemo and the Masters of Evil." And even though that title *does* sound pretty cool in retrospect, the point is that Class did not do much to promote a particular company or its characters.

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CREEPY WORLDS
APPROVED COMICS
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introducing "ZEMO! and his MASTERS OF EVIL!"
WE OUT-DID OURSELVES IN THIS ISSUE!! YOU'RE GOING TO SEE MORE SUPER-HEROES, MORE SUPER-VILLAINS, AND MORE SUPER-BONEHEAD MISTAKES THAN EVER, IN THIS ACTION-PACKED, FEATURE-LENGTH THRILLER!

In 1972, Marvel UK officially sets up shop, and dominates the marketplace with their heroes. Ironically, Class continued to publish Marvel super-hero stories mainly because the powers that be had forgotten the arrangement with Class. Now Class was in direct competition with Marvel. By the late '70s, Marvel UK (finally) realized this and rectified the situation. Class could no longer publish Marvel super-hero stories, but was still allowed to reprint Atlas/Marvel horror, sci-fi, and monster stories by Kirby, Ditko, Heck, et al. The genre material was more sporadic, however, as if Class still wanted to sneak them in from time to time but didn't want to overdo it in order to keep a low profile.

Was this the end of super-heroes in Class titles? Not by a long shot. By the late '60s, Class had branched out to more U.S. publishers including Tower, King and Archie. Wally Wood's T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents made their spectacular British debut in *Astounding Stories* #33 and would continue to be cover-featured until Alan Class ceased publication. King Comics' The Phantom, and Flash Gordon by Al Williamson, made quite a splash as well. And Archie's The Fly, Black Hood and even The Shadow made regular appearances until Class titles were well into their 200s. Super-heroes from aforementioned publishers ACG (Magicman and Nemesis) and Charlton (Captain Atom) also appeared throughout.

But once the Marvel material was pulled, Class did have trouble filling up issues with new stories. Once the titles reached numbering in the 100s, entire issues were reprinted from a previous Class issue. *Uncanny Tales* #148 is an identical reprint of *Uncanny Tales* #119. There are instances of changes—if a reprinted issue contained Marvel super-heroes or stories Class no longer had the stats for, that portion was removed and replaced with other material.

Even though Class was restricted from publishing Marvel super-heroes, that was not the reason for the end of the company as it continued for another ten or more years. Alan Class cancelled his comic books in 1989. The old story of higher printing costs and shrinking circulation pushed the price of the magazines up, and ultimately the books were no longer viable.

Today, the Class comics are becoming quite popular again with collectors. And you shouldn't have to pay a mint for them as they are reprints after all. Key issues, such as first issues or first appearances, can sell for $20-50. But most individual issues average between $5-10 on eBay and from Internet dealers.

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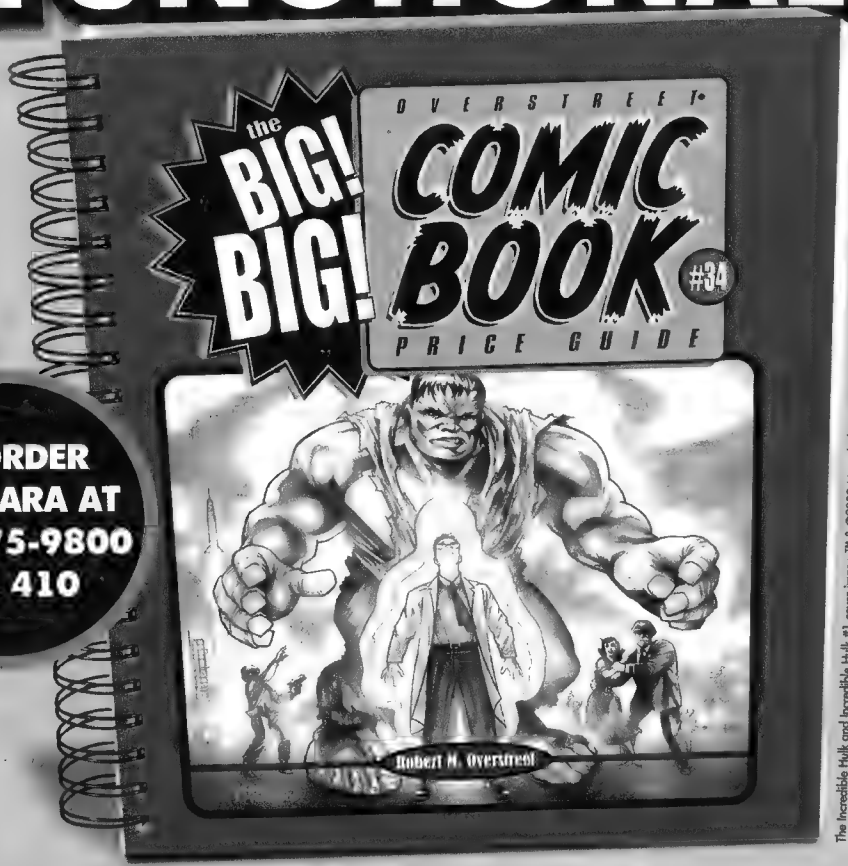

The Incredible Hulk and Incredible Hulk #1 cover image ™ & ©2003 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.

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by Pat Calhoun

Graphic Novels - An Expanded Definition

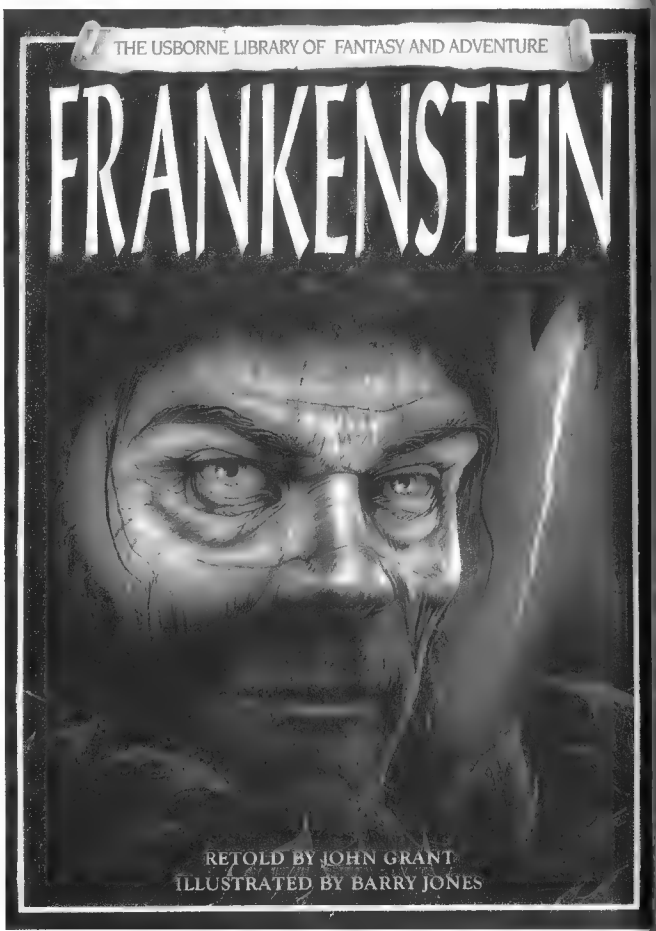
Whatever differences exist between "comic books" and "illustrated fiction," it should be fair to say that one stands a good chance of appealing to fans of the other, for both are "marriages" of stories and images. Here we'll examine abridged and copiously illustrated versions of three famous fantasy novels. They cover the range from a novel accompanied by many pictures—with the text still in control—to a series of paintings where the words are often bridges between them.

Frankenstein, "retold" by John Grant and illustrated by Barry Jones, was published in England in 1997 as part of the Usborne Library of Fantasy and Adventure. It's a tidy 100 pages long with 15 full-page color plates, color chapter headings, and numerous black and white drawings merged into the text pages. This perfect combination offers a meaty story and a ubiquitous visual feast. Unlike most of the Hollywood treatments of this legend, a good part of the story is told from the "monster's" viewpoint.

This rendering of Mary Shelley's classic outdoes itself in framing the "philosophical debate" of creating life in the most gripping narrative terms. The final sequence, with the hapless creature seeking exile and death in the glacial wastelands of the Arctic, is tremendously moving. This awesome adaptation keeps all the depth while maintaining a feverish pace—no mean feat. It's better than the Classics Illustrated production; in fact, one can only wonder at how it could be improved upon. The other volumes in the Usborne library sound promising as well; their *Dracula* is also by the team of Grant and Jones.

Greg Hildebrant's art for *Phantom of the Opera* adds just a hint of modernity to the romantic schmaltz of this period piece, but it wisely extended the range of appeal to include those who shy away from anything too "old fashioned." With all respect to Gaston Leroux, who wrote the original novel, the character's fame owes as much to the 1925 silent film with Lon Chaney's terrific Phantom. Nonetheless, this pared-down adaptation, using the flawless format of framed text on each left page and full-page, mostly painted (and several nice "charcoal") plates on each right, is a handsome package. The indicia describes this as a 1996 Barnes and Noble reprint of a 1993 Unicorn Publishing book that used art created in 1988!

Two of the best of the interior illos were used as front and back cover on this



Frankenstein, published by Usborne (UK) in 1997, cover-features a glimpse of Barry Jones' take on the science-spawned humanoid, and one of the ever-present lightning bolts which provided the spark of life to the creature.

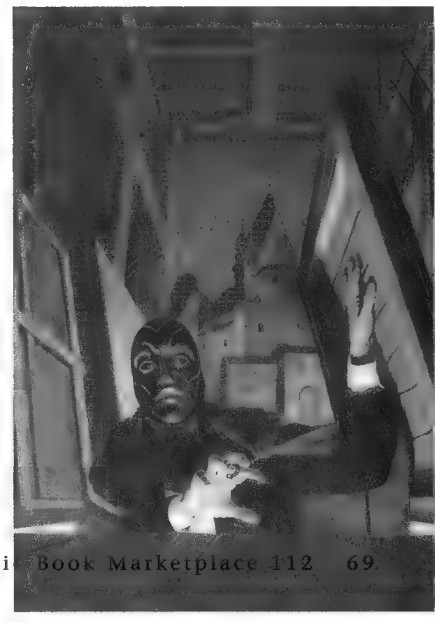
The creature confronts its maker: "Listen, you stupid, pathetic little man... I could snap you in two... The first I knew of the world was that my father was screaming because I looked revolting to him."

The partygoers turn somber as Red Death arrives. All know that it is the "ghost" of the Paris opera appearing among them, but none of them dare to confront him.

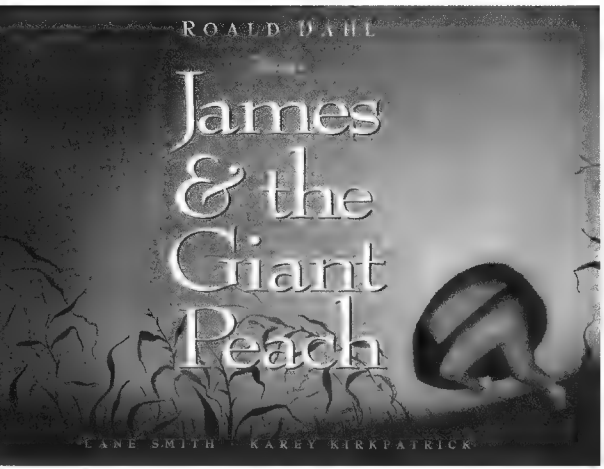
nicely-bound self-jacketed (glued-on) volume, which (like the Usborne above) displays a rewarding attention to detail, with an abundance of little graphic motifs. The images reproduced on the covers detail two emotional peaks of the tale. On the front cover Christine uncovers the true face of her mentor and tormentor, the all-too-real ghost that haunts the Paris Opera and has helped her become a great singer there. On the back cover the Phantom makes one of his rare public appearances—at the costume ball dressed as Red Death. The bright background highlights the grim image in the dim foreground: (When Christine unmasks the phantom she sees that the Red Death face is terrifyingly like his own.)

Barnes and Noble also reprinted an adaptation of *Dracula* with art by Greg Hildebrandt. These books were out in the US at the same time the Usborne books were "creeping" around the UK, part of a mid-1990s classic horror revival, although these icons are truly timeless—and deathless. Both the B-&-N and Usborne were aimed at a "young adult" level, the group that's the main audience for comics, and they probably sat on the same shelf as comic book compilations and graphic novels. But the field of children's books also yields worthwhile "condensations" (just add pictures!) of

Phantom of the Opera, a 1996 Barnes and Noble reprinting of the abridged novel, showcases Greg Hildebrandt's lush interpretation of this classic melodrama, with the Phantom unmasked on the cover as he plays on his underground organ.



This moody plate of the Phantom rising through a trap-door in the catacombed opera house is used both as the frontispiece and towards the end of the story.



James and the Giant Peach hailed from Disney Press in 1996, and condensed Roald Dahl's magic novel while adding the visual splendor of Lane Smith's concept paintings for the film. The cover shows James entering the giant peach through the hole he bit in it.

famous fantasy novels. And as parents know, the better children's books always accommodate the needs of both parents reading aloud and children listening—that is entertaining young and old alike!

When Roald Dahl's droll masterpiece *James and the Giant Peach* was chosen for a full-length Disney "claymation" film, Lane Smith won the job of creating concept paintings that would serve as guides for the sculptors and animators on both characters and scenery. And in a move that could have been a "throwaway" but instead worked brilliantly, these paintings were combined with a stripped-down version of the screenplay to make a superb book. Again, sound production values (nice insect endpapers!) and detailing flesh out the package in a way that provides for many enjoyable re-readings.

To quote the copy on the inside jacket flap "James was the saddest boy in the world until a mysterious stranger gave him a bag of magic green things, and then 'marvelous things began to happen': a giant peach, giant bugs, and an adventure-filled voyage across the ocean." Starting from the home of his odious aunts on the English seashore, the giant peach—with crew of James and some outsized insects—rolls into the ocean. And there—in order to escape the man-eating shark—James lassoes many seagulls until the peach rises into the air. After several exciting episodes it ends up "across the pond" in Jolly New York—impaled on the spire of the Empire State Building.

The story flies faster than a speeding bullet, and the art compels precious pauses. It's a heady mix for all ages. This book also hails from 1996, published by Disney Press, using a cute logo of the outside of an open book with mouse ears behind (i.e. reading) it. The shortened screenplay was written by scripter Karey Kirkpatrick. It's a memorable job all around.

While sleeping in the bed the giant spider spun, James has a nightmare of his two awful aunts, Spiker and Sponge, manifesting themselves as demons and tormenting him.

The above three books all enhanced themselves with a totality of packaging. Solid binding, quality paper, layouts, framing, and decor—plus the good integrated stories and art—gave us graphic novels of the highest caliber. When, as these three adaptations show, a basic ratio of "half text and half images" is used, the term graphic novel is quite appropriate, offering something remarkably similar to comics. And less pictures with more text is better termed illustrated fiction.

GLOWWORM
CENTIPEDE
SPIDER
And there he was, slipping and sliding on the gushy fruit until he found himself right inside the pit, surrounded by six large bugs!
"Look how frightened you are, dearie," said the kind Ladybug
"No need for all that," the Old Green Grasshopper added.
"We're your friends." They, like James, hated life on that miserable hill.
"I say we make a break for it!" proclaimed the boastful Centipede
So he chewed through the stem . . .
LADYBUG
EARTHWORM
GRASSHOPPER

Even the text pages (on the left with color plates on the right) are often festooned with images, such as here, where James first meets the giant bugs inside the peach.

Although the above speak well for mid-1990s publishing, it should be mentioned in closing that the first half of the twentieth century, when color printing was "perfected," is an inexhaustible treasure trove of all kinds of graphic novels, illustrated fiction and beautiful books.

by Michael Naiman

Weist's Hundred

There's nothing more fun in our hobby than when it comes to opinions. Everyone has one, just like—well, everyone has one! Whether it's about grading, restoration, slabbing, when was the beginning or end of (fill in your Age), favorite artist, creator or character.

Now there's one more topic for a heated discussion thanks to the latest Jerry Weist authored publication entitled *100 Greatest Comic Books*. Jerry polled a cross section of collectors, professionals, historians, retailers, fans and friends to come up with an astounding cross section of comicdom's top 100. What was used as the criteria? Historical impact, quality, introduction of new concepts, rarity and popularity.

You can agree or disagree with the choices, but what a kick to see the rank order of his selections! OK, I can give away the #1 choice—*Action* #1—but, we all knew that, right?

The book is very nicely illustrated and laid out. Especially entertaining is Steranko's "The Ages of Comics." This tome should produce invigorating debate among hobbyists for many years to come.

And from the Wonderful World of Disney we have some recent sales results of CGC slabbed *Uncle Scrooge*s: #4 VF+ 8.5 $242 (98% of *Guide*), #5 VF/NM 9.0 $620 (1.68X), #8 VF/NM 9.0 $320 (1.84X), #11 VF/NM $290 (1.81X), #22 NM 9.4 $610 (3.39X), #26 NM 9.4 $615 (2.93X), #32 NM- 9.2 $280 (1.87X), #189 NM 9.6 $39 (1.95X).

This year's *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* #34 includes 21 pages of pricing info on Big Little Books. Personally, I miss the BLB sized Overstreet price guide for these little gems. Same size as the BLB! It was very cool how it fit nicely in one's hand. But, I imagine that publication costs and demand have raised their ugly twin heads again, preventing the pocket sized book from being available. I'll never forget being back at Diamond headquarters and seeing stacks and stacks of these BLBs in pristine condition scattered around Steve Geppi's office. These appeared to have never been opened. Whew! It is a rarity indeed if one can find these today in a FN+ condition. My own small collection of these books dovetails into my Barks collection. Everyone should have a couple of examples of these hanging around. They are great conversation pieces.

Quinton Clem, the Guru of Harvey Comics collectors, reports the following Harvey titles that have moved around: *Devil Kids* #57 FN $5.50; *Dick Tracy* #143 VG $8; *Harvey Hits* #78 VG $10; *Little Audrey TV Funtime* #20 GD $6.27; *Little Dot* #146 FN $11.50; *Little Dot's Uncles and Aunts* #14 FN $23; *Little Lotta* #108 FN $9.50; *Playful Little Audrey* #29 FN $14.50; *Richie Rich Dollars and Cents* #62 FN $7.70, #63 FN $8.25; *Sad Sack and the Sarge* #3 FN $9; *Sad Sack Laugh Special* #15 VF $27; *Spooky* #131 FN $7.50; *Wendy Witchworld* #6 VF $40.

I read with amusement the Metropolis Index (page 103 of this year's *Guide*) comparing the 30 "blue chip" vintage comics and their increase in "value" with the Dow Jones index over the last 10 years. All of the comics were valued at "top grade." What percentage of these books even *exist* in "top grade"? While the disclaimer is carefully stated in the article that "*...numerous factors make an apples-to-apples comparison of comics and stocks a difficult proposition...*" one must remember that the number one difference is—*liquidity.* Most collectors have been in the position (and have gained the experience over time) to realize that *what you buy it for is not always what you can sell it for.* With these top 30 issues, there are only a handful of dealers and collectors in the United States who could pony up the hard cash for these high grade issues. One is at their mercy if they should smell that you are desperate to sell. Don't ever think that collectibles are the same as stocks. If it were so, wouldn't there be a New York Comic Exchange with daily values?

Recent sales from the **Bill Howard Squarebound Collection** (all slabbed): *80 Page Giant* #14 VF/NM $150, #15 VF+ $168; *Fantastic Four Annual* #5 NM $100; *Superman* #245 VF/NM $107; *Our Army at War* #177 (Winnipeg) VF/NM $212; *Marge's Little Lulu in Paris* #165 9.6 NM+ File Copy $305; *Sgt Fury Special* #2 VF (Northland) $47; *Superman Annual* #5 VF $158; *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane Annual* #2 VF $102; *Rocky and His Fiendish Friends* #1 NM+ (9.6) $810, #3 NM+ $560; *Walt Disney's Man in Space* NM- 9.2 File Copy $160; *Young Love* #111 NM/MT (9.8 Winnipeg) $400; *Popeye* #66 and #67 NM+ $160 each.

What's Superman to do these days when he needs to make a quick change into his cape and fly away faster than a speeding bullet to battle villains and fight for truth, justice and the American way? If he's looking for a phone booth, even Superman is facing a challenge. The phone booth, memorialized in movies, songs and even the *Guinness Book of World Records*—where records were kept for the most people stuffed in a phone booth—is quickly disappearing from the landscape. Vandalism is a constant problem. Will the phone booth become a distant memory of the wireless world?

Does any reader know if the origin of Superman changing his clothes in a phone booth originated in comics? Or was it the Fleischer cartoons of the '40s?

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

All American

#22	VG-	$189	33%
#26	GD	$263	74%

All Star

#13	GD	$200	83%
#39	GD	$190	1.7X

Amazing Spider-Man

#18	VF/NM	$455	85%
#30	VF	$203	1.33X
#31	VF	$164	98%
#32	VF/NM	$154	66%
#33	VF	$138	Guide
#33	VF/NM	$255	1.09X
#35	VF	$125	91%
#41	VF/NM	$122	41%
#42	VF/NM	$155	77%
#43	VF	$103	94%
#48	VF/NM	$159	Guide
#48	VF/NM	$160	Guide
#55	VF/NM	$49	43%
#56	VF/NM	$46	40%
#57	VF/NM	$56	49%
#63	VF/NM	$61	69%
#64	VF/NM	$58	65%
#100	VF/NM	$77	36%
#129	VF/NM	$375	1.3X
#129	VF/NM	$305	1.06X
#129	VF/NM	$268	93%
#129	VF	$299	1.71X
#135	VF/NM	$45	63%
#300	VF/NM	$60	85%

Avengers

#5	VF/NM	$120	39%
#6	FN	$26	39%
#10	FN	$39	65%
#10	VF/NM	$150	70%
#12	FN	$35	77%
#21	VF/NM	$48	62%
#25	FN	$28	1.33X
#26	FN	$53	2.52X
#39	VF/NM	$33	63%
#46	VF/NM	$40	91%
#49	VF/NM	$26	57%
#51	VF/NM	$37	84%
#65	VF/NM	$34	85%
#66	VF/NM	$39	89%
#72	VF/NM	$25	78%
#75	VF/NM	$27	84%
#85	VF/NM	$29	91%
#100	VF/NM	$48	52%
#28	GD	$80	52%
#31	GD	$91	81%
#78	VG	$75	49%
#85	FN	$110	63%
#85	VF-	$200	55%
#132	VF	$43	34%
#149	VF-	$25	28%
#175	VF-	$25	43%
#196	VF/NM	$22	40%
#200	VF/NM	$102	67%
#201	VF/NM	$25	48%
#222	VF/NM	$90	1.88X
#251	VF	$43	81%

Captain America

#5	FN(R)	"$1500"	81%
#13	FN	"$1200"	98%
#33	VG-	$305	76%

Detective

#327	VF	$46	55%
#381	VF	$25	69%
#387	VF-	$30	65%

Fantastic Four

#10	VG	$107	63%
#16	FN	$144	1.37X
#26	VG	$94	1.07X
#39	VF	$64	55%
#44	VF	$43	66%
#48	VG+	$103	76%
#54	VF/NM	$86	Guide
#55	FN	$32	82%
#73	VF	$49	82%
#87	VF	$35	97%
#94	VF/NM	$100	2.77X
#112	VG	$29	1.45X

Flash (GA)

#14	FN	$247	34%
#24	GD+	$165	79%
#60	GD	$75	88%

Green Lantern (GA)

#13	VG	$180	64%
#14	VG	$192	69%
#16	VG	$128	44%
#17	VG	$162	62%
#18	VG	$158	49%
#19	VG	$178	68%
#22	VG	$189	80%
#24	VG	$188	80%
#31	GD	$100	50%
#36	GD	$60	45%

Jungle

#6	FN	$250	59%
#12	VG	$100	91%
#13	VG	$100	91%
#29	FN+	$100	76%

Justice League of America

#7	VF-	$57	25%
#12	VF-	$57	37%
#15	VF-	$100	64%
#31	VF	$38	46%
#33	VF/NM	$49	58%
#49	VF	$36	78%
#61	VF	$38	1.06X

Marvel Mystery

#15	GD	$425	1.71X
#54	GD	$75	61%
#65	GD	$110	93%
#78	VG	$175	80%
#82	VG-	$500	95%
#86	GD	$225	2.25X

Sensation

#9	VG	$165	77%
#40	VG	$75	75%
#43	VG	$81	90%
#72	GD	$60	1.5X
#91	VG	$86	1.19X
#97	GD+	$95	2.15X
#101	GD	$81	1.84X

Superboy

#13	GD	$75	1.08X
#14	GD	$88	1.27X
#15	FN	$163	78%
#25	GD	$17	43%
#35	VG	$52	76%
#40	VG	$57	95%
#58	GD	$25	1.19X
#60	FN	$27	42%
#61	FN	$18	29%
#65	VG	$23	55%
#78	FN	$35	53%
#80	VG	$28	73%
#90	FN	$19	66%

Tales of Suspense

#77	VF	$19	44%
#86	VF	$21	49%
#91	VF	$20	47%

Wonder Woman

#1	GD	"$1225"	58%
#13	GD	$100	93%
#24	GD+	$188	2.19X
#46	GD	$96	1.92X
#79	GD	$87	2.8X
#80	GD+	$81	2.61X
#95	VG	$96	1.77X

World's Finest

#8	VG	$255	71%
#113	FN	$34	94%
#188	FN	$16	1.07X

X-Men

#6	VF-	$100	30%
#7	VF	$300	91%
#9	VF	$155	59%
#12	FN	$72	63%
#19	FN	$34	71%
#22	FN	$33	85%
#35	FN	$35	61%
#41	FN	$30	1.11X
#94	VF/NM	$294	38%
#101	FN	$46	1.53X

Giant Size X-Men

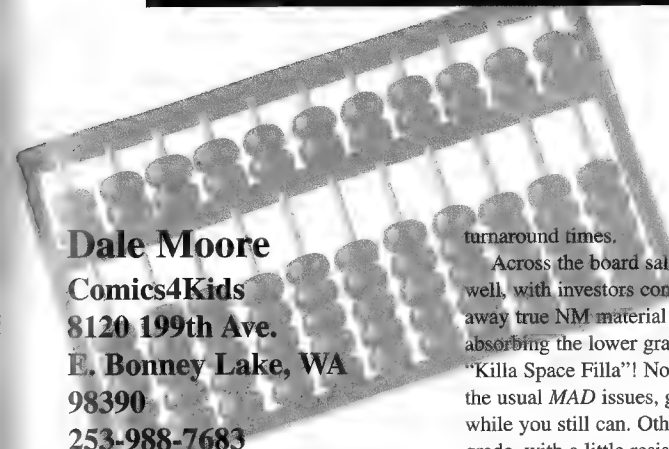
#1	VF	$305	52%
#1	VF-	$242	41%
#1	VF/NM	$375	42%

I wonder if any of today's younger collectors are even aware of the phone booth changing routine?

Some recent up-up-and-away sales of Golden Age *Superman* include: #14 GD $335 (1.05X *Guide*), #16 FN+ $530 (1.03X), #19 GD $129 (75% of *Guide*), #20 VG/FN $323 (75%), #22 GD $97 (75%), #28 VF- $490 (65%), and #31 VG $150 (75%).

Summer is upon us and that means movie time. Let's hope *Spider-Man 2*, *Catwoman*, Godzilla and the rest of the comic-fare brings some type of summer relief. Most anticipated for me is the Halle Berry vehicle of *Catwoman*. Hopefully the writing will be a couple of steps above the standard fair for the Academy Award winning actress. Will Spidey still have legs for the 2007 release of *Spider-Man 3*? Dunno.

Spider-Man Strikes Out! Now that the Spidey/Major League Baseball brouhaha is behind us, I thought that there was a great quote from John Delcos, who covers the Yankees for the *Westchester Journal News*: "Major League baseball's putting Spider-Man on the bases as a way of marketing the game to kids? Maybe they should try starting World Series games early enough so kids can actually see them."



Dale Moore
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The transition from Sarasota, Florida back to the Great Northwest went super and we hit the ground running once we got used to the dramatic weather change! It has been a brisk few months, with both *incredible* donations of comics for the kids (we have given out over 100,000 now!) and two huge consigNMents of the Jason Bessonette and Gary Barnes collections, which will last throughout the year. Each has given generously from their proceeds back to C4K. Thanks guys!

Additionally, our merchandise at cafepress.com/comics4kids has been moving well, and we encourage you to visit them and promote your own products as well since cafepress doesn't charge any fees to make your t-shirts, ball caps, etc. You supply the image and they really do all the rest, from promotion and sales to shipping. Then they send you the money they make over cost. As our friends in Hollywood say, "It's all good, from the talent pool to the toilet bowl!"

Dealers at the last Seattle Con showed us that the gap between CGC and CGG is closing, mentioning that local favorites CGG have improved their outer holder to surpass CGC's fragile vehicle, and if they can procure better wedge technology and extinguish restoration detection issues CGG may become a force to be reckoned with. What's hitting CGC the hardest is that CGG has lower prices and faster turnaround times.

Across the board sales are going very well, with investors continuing to secret away true NM material and collectors absorbing the lower grades, for that "Killa Space Filla"! Notably absent are the usual *MAD* issues, go grab #24-30 while you still can. Other EC flies in any grade, with a little resistance for the New Direction titles.

Set to explode are the *Shock Illustrated* #1, 2, and especially the *HTF* #3 (100 copies). Also seeing price resistance are the 30-cent Marvel variants and DC Whitman "no number" issues, while their counterparts 35-cent Marvel and Disney Whitman 3-pack issues are screaming hot. Another new fad is the "window box" Marvels from the early '70s that run through all titles. Get out your Gerber and check 'em out!

Amazing Spider-Man is outselling casual issues of X-Men titles two-to-one, and low-grade popular titles from the Silver Age are fast movers for DC. Marvel picks this up with *Strange Tales*, *TOS* and *TTA* from that era as well as all keys in any grade. Modern comics have given a new lease on life (as it were) to the horror genre, as we have seen almost all our stock depleted: *King of the Dead* #0-4, *Nightmare on Elm Street* #1-6, *Jason vs. Leatherface* #1-3, *Jason Goes to Hell* #1-3, *Leatherface* #1-4, and *Miracleman* #15-24 as well as *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction*, *San Diego Comic-Con Comics* #2, John Byrne's *Next Men* #21. And we hail the return of the good girl art genre, anticipating Frank Cho's new *Shanna the She-Devil* from Marvel Max this fall. Now if we could only get bad girl era survivor Joseph Michael Linsner's *Dawn* in a nude monthly, why we might even die happy!

On the tails of the magnificent Emerald City Comic Con in Seattle, we report that other Seattle shows' attendance has dropped. Keys sit on shelves in any grade. But in Portland, Oregon the shows are still so screaming hot you can literally sell the shirt off your back! Of course, all of us here at Comics4Kids are looking forward to volunteering in San Diego this year.

Magazines: *Marvel Annual Report* 1991 VG+ $29.99; *Vampirella* #1 GD $68, #2 FR/GD $26; *Satan Magazine* (Betty Page) VG $21; *Planet of the Apes* #1 NM $100, #2 VF $9.99, #29 NM $100; *TMNT* #4 FN $20.

Golden OLDEN Age: *Our Army at War* #7 GD $20; *Sparkler Comics* #55 GD $9.99; *Superman* #5, 9, 11 FR/GD $200 group, #69 VG $100, #144 VG $20, #163 VG $20; *Roy Rogers Comics* #7 VG $26; Dell Giant *Abraham Lincoln* #1 NM $120; *Archie Comics* #55 VG $17, #100 VG $21; *Four Color* #9 VG $1200, #16 GD $1200 (cover detached); *Incredible Science Fiction* #30 (1) FR/GD $22; *Detective Comics* #34 VG $660.

Silver Age: *JLA* #5 GD $23; *Strange Tales* #114 VG $30; *Superman's GF Lois Lane* #71 FN $20; *Green Lantern* #59 VF $100; *Iron Man* #1 FN $100; *Sgt. Fury* #1 VG $225, #13 GD $18; *Showcase* #20 GD $40, #45 VG $34, #47 FN $30, #60 VG/FN $20; *Flash* #105 FR/GD $190; CFO *Fantastic Four* #1, 4 FR/GD $630 set, #48 GD $36, Coupon Cut #48 VG $100; *X-Men* #1 VG $975, #1 FN $2000; *Amazing Fantasy* #15 VG $2500; *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 VG $2000, #3 VG $500, #5 VG $300; *Tales of Suspense* #39 VG $1200.

BronzeAge: *Ghost Rider* #1 GD $10, #1 VG $41, #1 FN $100; *Marvel Spotlight* #5 FN $100; *Mighty Marvel Western* #45 (35-cent variant) VG $180; *Chilling Adventures in Sorcery* #1 FN $36, #1 VF $91, #1 NM $113; *Conan the Barbarian* #1 GD $40, #1 VG $110, #1 VF $200; *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 VG $135, FN- $199, FN+ $250, VF

$500; *Incredible Hulk* #181 VG $250, FN $500, VF $1100.

Modern: *G.I. Joe, A Real American Hero* #1 NM $20; *Werewolf by Night* #32 VG $18; *Y the Last Man* #2 NM $10; *Hulk: The End* #1 NM $16; *Superman/Batman* #1 (Superman) NM $9, #1 (Batman) NM $5; *Uncanny X-Men* #266 VF $29; *Wolverine* reg #1 VF $20; *Batman: DKR* S/N HC NM $300.

Greg White

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Welcome to sunny and warm Central Florida. We have had a quiet month at the retail level. Not that many collectors visit the store anymore. They prefer to sit on their ass and purchase via the computer. Although I am not a "mint" freak I still much prefer to see books in person that I am considering buying. I seem to be a dying breed. Most collectors today fill their needs month by month over the Internet and do not feel compelled to visit their local shop (this only applies if their local shop still promotes pre-1975 comic books) or comic convention. Over-the-counter traffic is diminishing.

The future will be a greater challenge. The rage of purchasing slabbed books has also had its effect. I offer no slabbed comic books thus I am missing out on that portion of the market. I do not believe in slabbed books. They have little to do with the hobby of collecting comic books—slabbed books exist primarily for those who use comic books as an investment vehicle. I prefer to deal with pure collectors and hobbyists. Until the slab fad begins to wane (and rest assured that it will—see what happened to baseball cards) my sales will be less then they should be. Better days will dawn once buyers realize how foolish it is to pay multiples of *Guide* for books that are clearly available in the same condition unslabbed for much less.

Silver Age 1955-1969: Not many sales this month. We bought a collection of *Amazing Spider-Man*. Not much else came in. Low-mid-grade continues to move best. High-grade is nice but many of my customers just cannot afford them. Marvel and DC lead the pack. Dell, Gold Key, Charlton are slow.

Recent Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #4 VG $400; *Avengers* #1 (TV Show) VF $40; *Batman* #166 VF $35; *Iron Man* #1 VF/NM $375; *Showcase* #22 FA $250; *X-Men* #1 VG $1100.

Golden Age 1935-1955: A nice group of three dozen early 1940s DC comics came in last week. Collections like this are the reason I am still here. What a breath of fresh air compared to the shit that dominates the hobby today. Golden Age DCs, Timelys and comparable books will always brighten my day! I have a couple comic shows this spring/summer and these will help flush out my selection. Only a few sales this month—many GA books just won't sell at *Guide*. This is an old problem. When is the last time you were able to get full *Guide* across the board on a dozen or so comics from this period? Let's get the *Guide* prices more in line with reality.

Recent Sales: *Archie* #7 VG $100; *Batman* #14 VG $400; *Comic Cavalcade* #1 VG $1100; *Marvel Mystery* #17 VG $750; *World's Finest* #3 VF $1800.

Artwork and Toys: A quite month in this area. Once again most activity takes place on the Internet. I have seen a vintage group of art available for sale to the store for quite a while. Like everyone I would purchase most any pre-1970 art that came in. Hopefully we will get a hit soon. I did buy a nice set of vintage Matchbox cars all in their little yellow boxes. I also purchased a group of Hanna-Barbera animation cels.

Recent Sales: *Superman* Aurora model in box $300; Capt Action loose Spider-Man uniform $750; Matchbox bus in box $25; 1943 Donald Duck animation drawing $125; Win Mortimer 1962 daily original art $25.

That will wrap up my month. Give us a call if you visit the Walt Disney World area!

Keith Contarino

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Greetings from the Deep South where it's currently 30 degrees!! Been awhile and I'm happy to be asked for my input after a long layoff. I've basically stopped doing shows and buy/sell strictly through mail, mostly through eBay. I still have old customers but with the explosion of the Internet, everyone's a dealer and with the grading services, everyone's equal. That is, my reputation for 25 years as a strict and honest grader is basically worthless, and that's ok because the same is true for everyone else. On low-grade cheaper books that aren't worth submitting, I still have my rep as do other dealers but on high-ticket items, buyers want third party grading.

I admit I was wrong five years ago when I said this would not happen. For better or worse, it did and we all need to live with it. I have used both services and find CGG to be even more strict, especially on newer comics, but CGC-graded books still bring higher prices than comparably graded CGG books.

Whether this will change in the future, I don't know. My guess is, as CGG becomes accepted, their books will command comparable prices, but that's just a guess. There are now so many trading card grading companies that only a few command higher prices.

Anyway, as to the market. This comes as no surprise but buyers are becoming even fussier. This harkens to the early '90s when VF and VF+ were considered low- to mid-grades on most books unless very old or key or both. In my experience the past few years, Golden Age has died. Run of the mill GA books are plentiful and rarely bring *Guide*.

Of course, keys are extremely expensive and out of my price range. I no longer try to buy GA. What I have left sells okay but for lower prices than two or three years ago. For the average GA collector, this is good news as decent copies of most titles can be had reasonably. It is also true for run of the mill low-grade Silver. There's so much of it on eBay, it can be had at pre-1996 prices. I routinely put up books like VG copies of Neal Adams *B&B* and they bring just a few dollars. I've stopped putting up extremely high-grade copies of anything ungraded, even books like *She-Hulk* #1.

It's worth the CGC or CGG lottery to send in anything really nice as you can't get squat for it ungraded. I'll give an example. I had a stunning *ASM* #45 up awhile back—ungraded except by yours truly—called it a 9.4, had a reserve of 1.5X NM *Guide*, didn't sell; sent it in, came back 9.4 and sold for 3-4X NM *Guide*. Post-1980 books are even nuttier. People paying thousands of dollars for books like *DD* #168 in *any* grade is just crazy but that's the market and I think it will be for the future.

The Bronze Age keys like *Hulk* #181 and Modern Age keys like *DD* #168 are the new Gold and Silver keys. You can buy a nice VG *Fantasy* #15 for a fraction of what a 9.6 *Hulk* #181 will cost. This, again, is good news for collectors but not for investors unless the investors of days past bought high-grade books. Those that did, like most of my old friends and customers, now have a fortune in high-grade Silver. Those who bought low-grade copies do not and those that got low-grades restored are seeing their collections depreciate every year.

Complete morons like me who put up high-grade copies of books like *AF* #15, *DD* #7, *FF* #50, *Strange Tales* #110, etc., and sold them before the grading services came about should be millionaires but are not. This is also true of those of us that turned down near perfect copies of books like *X-Men* #94 due to slight tanning of pages, which really doesn't matter anymore.

I do think the grading companies are off base on one important item, centering of books. I could be wrong, as I have been about most of the slabbing and grading issues, but off center cut books simply are not as pretty as centered ones. It has always been considered a defect even when we were buying them off the shelves in the '60s. Graded cards first came out mint, then mint and centered and now cut is an important criterion. I think this will be a way investors discriminate among high-grade comics in the future. I'm already doing it as are many customers of mine.

Remember when I said pre-unity Valiants were a good investment? Well, there actually is renewed interest in some of these like *Rai* #3, 4, *Solar* #10 and *Magnus* #12. Getting a 9.4 or higher on these books is apparently tough due to a myriad of printing problems.

Books I see as still escalating: *ASM* #129, *Hulk* #122, 141, *FF* #50, *DD* #7, all *JIM* below #100 in graded 9.0 or higher, 9.6 or higher *FF* #121-123, 9.4 or higher *DD* #158, all Miller *DD*s 9.6 or higher #158-179, *ASM* #50, *Avengers* #57, *FF* #39, *Uncle Scrooge* #179 (wish I had bought the VG up for sale recently, book is impossible to find).

As to **sales**, here are some: *All-Flash* #24 unslabbed VG $112; *ASM* #33 CGC 9.4 $675; *DD* #1 CGG 8.5 $2500, #159 CGC 8.0 $10, #164 CGC 9.6 $51, #168 CGC 8.5 $71 (I sold a 9.6 over a year ago for $775); *FF* #55 CGC 9.2 $375, #55 CGC 9.6 $1950, #72 CGC 8.5 $42, #126 CGC 9.6 $250; *Iron Fist* #14 unslabbed NM- $71; *Luke Cage* #1 unslabbed F plus a *Nova* #1 VF/NM $17; *Sgt. Fury* #1 unslabbed G/VG $115.

Vincent Zurzolo, Jr.

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What's hot in comics? The new news in comics is the same old news in comics—Marvel Silver Age keys are hot. But the real question is: How hot are they? Over the last few months I have read and heard about many transactions taking place at record levels. I do not doubt that books have changed hands but I do wonder about the details of the sales. Were these actual cash sales? The reason I say this is that oftentimes a seller will say they sold something for a certain price when the sale was actually a cash and trade deal. There is a distinct difference between paying cash for a comic and trading a comic you have owned for another comic.

For all we know these sales all occurred and were paid for, not traded for, but when something sounds too good to be true it usually is. Remember just because you read something in a newspaper or on a website or an auction or hear it from a friend it doesn't necessarily make it so. We have seen many "sold items" appear for sale again several months later. Perhaps they are simply being sold again, who knows? Or perhaps there is a piece of the puzzle not available to us and we don't really know what is going on. The years following the advent of the Internet are often called the Information Age; perhaps they should be called the Misinformation Age. In no way am I trying to discredit every high-end sale made in the last twelve months. I am simply suggesting you may not have all of the information you need.

To be a successful collector/investor in this or any market you need a plan and you need to stick to it. You need to do your homework and be a dark knight detective of sorts. You need to find people you feel comfortable with and, equally important, you need to collect what you like. If you don't collect what you like, one day you may look into your box of comics and ask yourself "what the hell am I doing?"

This is one of the healthiest comic markets I have seen. Since January 1, 2004 I have seen a tremendous number

of new collectors/investors entering the market. They are not just buying high-grade comics either. They collect and invest in a variety of comics ranging from esoteric low- and mid-grade Golden Age to western key issues in all grades. The high-end CGC market is doing well of course, but what is intriguing is that the low-grade CGC and raw market is also picking up. Low-grade *Amazing Fantasy* #15, *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 and *Fantastic Four* #1s, just to name a few, are selling for over *Guide* right now. I believe this is due to a perception of the books being undervalued. It will be interesting to see if there are any jumps on the low-end prices in the next *Guide*.

I mentioned earlier that as a collector/investor you should educate yourself and enjoy what you are doing. Over the last three months I have been hosting an online radio show called the "The Comic Zone." Every Monday from 3-4 pm EST "The Comic Zone" is broadcast live onto your computer. I believe the show can be a valuable tool to better educate yourself about the current state of the marketplace, history of our hobby and, of course, to listen to creators from the past and the present. The show has been on since early December. In that short period of time the show has risen through the ranks of over 45 shows hosted on http://www.worldtalkradio.com and is ranked the fifth most listened to show. The show attracts thousands of listeners per week. The beauty of the show is that not only can people listen to it live, but every show can be listened to in the archives section. The live shows and the archives can be accessed by going to and clicking on "The Comic Zone" icon at the top of the website.

Past guests have included artists Neal Adams, Jim Steranko, Todd McFarlane, Terry Austin, Murphy Anderson, Mark Bagley, Walt Simonson, Al Feldstein, Jack Kamen, Mike Mignola, Joe Kubert, Irwin Hasen, writers Peter David, Mike San Giacomo, sculptor Randy Bowen, comic historian Arlen Schumer, actor David Carradine, director Sandy Collora (*Batman Dead End*), writer/director David Mandel (*Seinfeld, Euro Trip*), Producer Danny Simmons (Def Poetry Jam), Diamond Galleries President John Snyder, CGC President Steve Borock and GP Analysis President George Pantela. You can listen to all of these interviews and more for free on "The Comic Zone"—enjoy!

Recent sales: *World's Finest* CGC all 9.6: #176 $320, #179 $390, #180 $235; *Adventure* CGC all 9.6: #363 $275, #365 $290, #370 $270; *Silver Surfer* #10 CGC 9.8 $1800; *All American* #29 CGC 9.0 $1600; *Scribbly* #4 2.0 Raw $100, #6 2.0 Raw $50, #10 4.0 Raw $95, #11 5.0 Raw $100.

Al Stoltz

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Pittsburgh Comic Con has now come and gone for the year 2004, and I have yet to really figure out why it was as slow as it was for me? The Pittsburgh Comic con is run by Mike and Renee George, two of the nicest promoters you can ever hope to deal with in this business. The room is nice and bright, tons of artists, good selection of different items for buyers to buy, great location, so where did the chemistry go so wrong?

For one, Wonder Con was the same exact weekend yet again. A few of my bigger buyers decided to do the West Coast for a change and never made it to the event. Wizard Philly is only a few weeks after the Pitt Con, and I heard from many other customers that they were saving their pennies to do that show instead. The big killer may have been the Mega Toy show that was literally across the hall from us that also sported plenty of comic dealers and other related items. The admission was only $5.00 to the Toy show—that may have spurred some parents and other patrons to attend that event instead of paying a much larger fee to enter our show. The dealers at that show paid $50 a table and were mostly a mix of guys we have never seen before. So many a great deal was had by dealers in our room flooding over to the Toy show on Friday night when it was free for us to attend. I personally bought an incredible stack of very high-grade early Harvey comics including a *Wendy* #1 that is sweet! So the show started and ended with the flow of customers never getting above a dull roar and being very picky about what they wanted to spend their hard earned cash on. We did manage to sell: *Teenage Mutant Turtles* #1 First Print FN- $550; *Tops Comic* #2 FN+ Lev Gleason $500. We also sold a group of Timelys we have had in inventory for a decent turn over sum. Just not many incredible sales to tell about this trip out. We did manage to buy well and spread some of that stuff all over eBay this week, but that was about the highlight of the Con. I hope that a slow trend is just a combination of the above mentioned problems and not an indicator of a slow year at the shows.

Jamie Newbold

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It is early May as I write this brief report. My business is feeling the effects of the war in Iraq. Military customers are disappearing. Some are forced to sell off some or all of their collections—mostly new stuff. Meaning, they are not going to buy any more new comics from me. Higher gas prices are grounding drivers and the subtle increasing of comic book prices, both new and back issue, are challenging my buyers as well.

On the plus side, there is growing excitement about the upcoming San

Diego Comic Con. We are seeing some pretty interesting stuff as it is offered to us for wholesale purchasing. Owners are freeing up portions of their collections to turn the money over into something else of interest at the Con. Keeps me pretty busy updating my website with the new purchases.

The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* arrived several weeks ago. Sales on this issue are disappointing. We usually move about 30 copies through my store relatively quickly. We reorder smaller quantities from Diamond and satisfy demand throughout the year. This time, there seems to be some resistance to purchasing the *Guide*. Some buyers are content to measure comic book values using the action online or various websites. Others are put off by the change-up from 9.4 to 9.2 as the high-end benchmark.

The disturbing factor involves the buyers who were too young to be in the hobby during Overstreet's early, developing years. I have back-issue buyers that don't use the *Guide* and don't know how to grade. There seems to be more of these people prevalent than in previous years. They shop according to price or the 9 point-something number attached to the book. I also see a reluctance to buy this year's *Guide* based upon cover appeal. I actually have buyer's picking up the Captain Marvel HC because I sold out of softcovers and they don't want the Disney SC.

The choice of cover art was aesthetically wonderful, as always. But, for sales purposes I would have sold a few more copies if the two covers were Jim Lee's Batman and Michael Turner's Superman. Or something similar. I believe that the cover art grows more distant each year from the age group that should be targeted for *Guide* sales. You want to satisfy the Gold and Silver Age memories or sell books?!

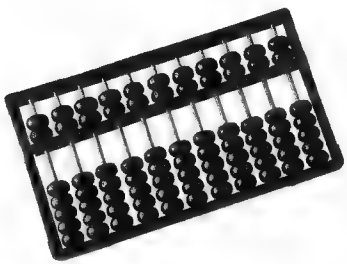
Golden Age: *Adventure Into Unknown Worlds* #29 FN $48; *All-Flash* #14 VG/FN $250; *Crime SuspenStories* #6 VG $62; *Crypt of Terror* #18 GD $175; *Dell Giant Silly Symphonies* #5 FN+ $60; *Haunt of Fear* #4 GD $70, #14 VG $82; *Journey Into Unknown Worlds* #25 FN $85, #58 FN $85; *Shield-Wizard* #3 FN $366; *Speed Carter, Spaceman* #3 VG $75; *Speed Comics* #2 VG+ $225; *Strange Tales* #32 FN+ $115; *Tales From The Crypt* #46 G/VG $66; *Vault of Horror* #20 VG $70, #21 VG $66, #37 VG $60.

Silver Age: *Action Comics* #266 VG $38; *Amazing Spider-Man* #97 F/VF $60; *Avengers* #3 VF $278, #71 VF $38; *Batman* #171 CGC 6.5 FN+ $153; *Fantastic Four* #65 VF/NM $56; *Incredible Hulk* #106 VF/NM $75, #107 VF- $45, #108 FN+ $25; *Iron Man* #8 VF/NM $53, #10 VF+ $46; *Justice League of America* #9 VG $82; *Strange Tales* #73 FN $69; *Superman* #133 VG- $38; *Tales To Astonish* #27 VG+ $575, #35 VG $250; *Untouchables* FC #1286 FN $47; *Vampirella* #3 VF/NM $350; *X-Men* #7 FN $100, #8 FN $105, #10 FN- $90, #18 FN $48, #21 FN+ $49, #28 CGC 6.5 FN+ $75, #30 F/VF $64.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #128 F/VF $21, #144 VF $23, #145 VF/NM $29, #146 VF/NM $29, #147 NM $35; *Avengers* #107 NM- $28; *Defenders* #8 NM $35, #9 NM $39; *Incredible Hulk* #181 VF $750; *New Gods* #8 VF+ $26; *Savage Tales* #5 NM $30; *Superman* #251 NM- $25; *X-Men* #102 F/VF $30, #114 NM $75, #133 NM $45.

Modern Age: *Ultimate Spider-Man* #5 VF/NM $45

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*



COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#50	Julius Schwartz,Captain Comet	$10
#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane	$8
#66	Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!	$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	$8
#76	Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton	$8
#79	Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Captain Action	$8
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	$8
#84	Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac	$8
#85	Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I	$8
#86	Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II	$8
#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph	$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, Perez Part II	$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	$8
#91	Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler	$8
#92	Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth	$8
#93	Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone	$8
#94	GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up	$8
#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	$8
#96	Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel	$8
Sp#5	Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8	$12
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	$8
#98	Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin	$8
#99	Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers	$8
#100	Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman	$8
#101	Archie, Butch Guice, CrossGen	$8
#102	Lev Gleason, Russ Heath, Commercial Comics Co.	$8
#103	Disney Comics, Jack Bradbury, Don Rosa	$8
#104	Batman, Neal Adams, Loeb & Lee, Lew Schwartz	$9
#105	Wrightson, Kaluta, Jeffrey Jones, Bruce Jones	$9
#106	Good Girl Art, Rima, Cat Girl, John Celardo	$9
#107	Victor Fox, Aquaman's Paul Norris	$9
#108	End of DC's SA, Geo. Carlson, GA Black Market	$9
#109	GA Villains, Neal Adams Pt. 2, Infantino	$9

Prices include postage.
Add $2 each for orders outside U.S.
MD (5%) & MO (6.975%) add sales tax.
MasterCard, VISA orders call 800 322 7978.

CBM BACK ISSUES
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
PO BOX 469
WEST PLAINS, MO 65775-0469

by Michelle Nolan

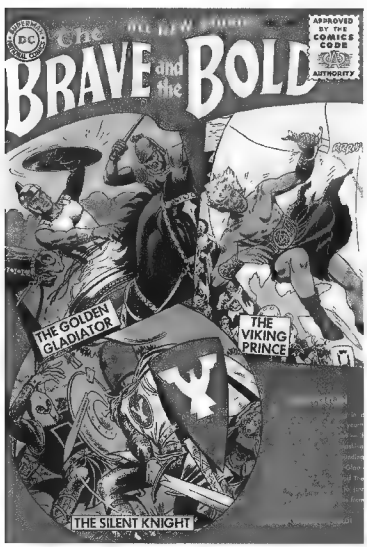
Time to Get "MAD"

What, me worry? That wonderful year 1955 was a nightmare for those who liked horror comics but a dream for those who loved satire.

One of the most important developments in the annals of American pop culture occurred in 1955, when EC Comics publisher Bill Gaines converted *MAD* from a comic to a magazine. *MAD*'s circulation soon multiplied many times over and numerous imitations popped up.

Teachers all over America went crazy confiscating *MAD*, which conveniently fit perfectly into a school folder. (Don't ask, I just know!) Over the past five decades, surely no other publication has had such an influence on the development of a distinctly American sense of parody.

But though *MAD Magazine* was by far the most important comic-related



publication to emerge in 1955, it wasn't the only socially and commercially significant development.

Though the Comics Code Authority was created in 1954, the famous (or infamous) seal of the Code did not appear on comics until 1955. That, of course, represented only the second time an American entertainment industry had submitted to censorship to save itself from possible intervention. The first such occasion was when the Hays Office censorship code took effect for movies in 1934 (basically lasting until a ratings system replaced it in 1968).

Comic books, like movies, for many years were not allowed to reflect realistically the grittier and more sensual aspects of American life. In movies of the 1940s, couples were not allowed in the same bed; in the comics of 1955, serious crime and cleavage became virtually nonexistent for a good many years.

Movies, though, did not suffer financially from censorship. Comic books did, taking a significant hit in 1955. Comics historian Dan Stevenson's issue-by-issue database shows that newsstand comic books suffered a 14 percent decline, dropping from 2,719 issues with 1954 dates to 2,338 issues in 1955 (give or take a few issues that may not exist).

Anecdotal evidence indicates circulation dropped at least 14 percent and perhaps as much as 25 percent, in large part because of the public's response to the crescendo of criticism of horror and crime titles in 1954.

It's a myth, though, that dozens of companies went out of business. None of the major publishers disappeared in 1955, except for EC, which was major in terms of aesthetic impact if not total circulation. The last EC comic book to hit the stands was *Incredible Science Fiction* #33 (Jan/Feb 1956).

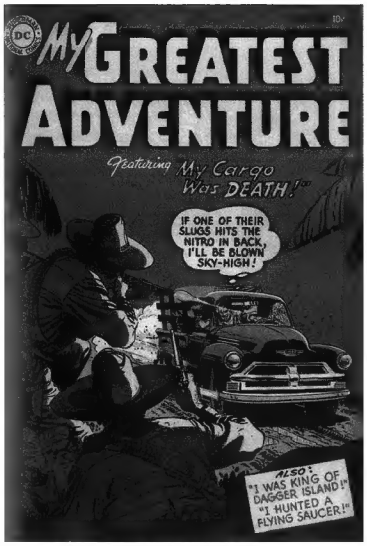
We did see the last of minor publishers Story/Premier, Toby, Orbit, Mainline, Sterling, Eastern and United Features. The only new comic book venture to appear in 1955, newspaper reprint publisher Argo, lasted less than a year and produced only 30 issues, with no title running more than four issues.

FIRST ISSUE
THE NEW
MAD
No. 24 • HUMOR IN A JUGULAR VEIN • JULY 1955
This new magazine is vital for you to read and inside you will find an extremely important message from the editors ☞

The Comics Code Authority symbol first appeared on comics variously dated March, April and May. I've seen monthlies dated March with the Code symbol and monthlies dated April without it. However, I've never seen a comic book with a February 1955 date with the Code symbol. Were there any? I checked all the romance comics listings and found there were no February issues with the Code symbol.

Only five comic books destined for long, uninterrupted runs were introduced with 1955 dates—DC's *Brave and the Bold*, *Falling in Love* and *My Greatest Adventure*, plus Harvey's *Spooky* and *Little Lotta*. Numerous other attempts fell flat.

My Greatest Adventure #1 was the only one of the five first issues to be issued before the Comics Code took effect, giving the title the distinction of being the last commercially successful


MY GREATEST ADVENTURE
featuring My Cargo Was DEATH!
IF ONE OF THEIR SLUGS HITS THE NITRO IN BACK, I'LL BE BLOWN SKY-HIGH!
ALSO: "I WAS KING OF DAGGER ISLAND!" "I HUNTED A FLYING SAUCER!"

launch of a pre-Code comic. For my money, though, the most important comic books issued in 1955 were the first two *Dennis the Menace* square-bound giants, *Superman* #100, and five *Davy Crockett* issues from Dell.

Dennis the Menace was only two years old in the comics—and four years old on the comics pages—when the giants appeared. As a money-maker, Dennis was anything but a menace to profits.

Although Dell (Western) already had begun to issue comics based on television and film adaptations, the company really hit financial pay dirt with four issues of *Davy Crockett* in the Four-Color series and a *Davy Crockett* square-bound giant. These took maximum advantage of one of the great crazes in American history, Disney's version of the *King of the Wild Frontier*.

Superman #100 celebrated the character's history with cover-featured reprints of the covers to *Superman* #1, 25, 50 and 75. Never before had DC indicated it even had a comic book history, much less such a rich one, although limited continuity already had begun.

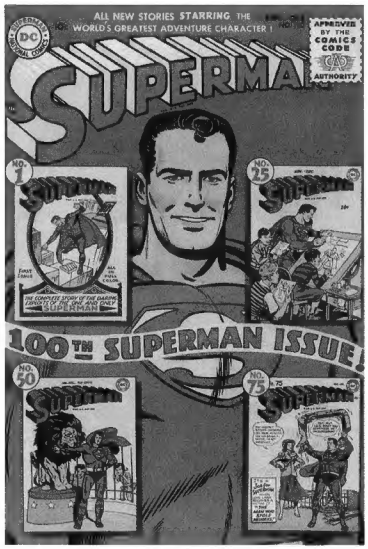
DC introduced three characters in 1955, and it's only a coincidence that two of them were dogs—Krypto in *Adventure* #210 and Ace the Bat Hound in *Batman* #92. There are collectors, though, who often cite these Code-approved canines as evidence of how comic books had lost their bite.

The other character wasn't human, either. The Manhunter from Mars debuted in *Detective* #225, which some collectors consider the first Silver Age comic.

One of the most commercially successful comic books of the 1940s, Lev Gleason's trend-setting *Crime Does Not Pay*, failed in 1955 along with its companion title, *Crime and Punishment*. Comparing one of the final few Code-approved issues of *Crime Does Not Pay* with one of the blood-spattered issues of a decade earlier is nothing less than a remarkable study in censorship and changing mores.

One late 1955 title change tells it all: Charlton's *Crime and Justice* #26 became *Rookie Cop* with #27.

The flurry of short-lived costume heroes in 1955—best exemplified by Bob Powell's nice art in *The Avenger* #1-


ALL NEW STORIES STARRING THE WORLD'S GREATEST ADVENTURE CHARACTER!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SUPERMAN
100TH SUPERMAN ISSUE!

4 from Magazine Enterprises—ended with the last Atom Age appearance of Marvel's *Sub-Mariner* in #42 (Oct). Here was a meaningful juxtaposition: the last *Sub-Mariner* may well have been on the stands concurrently with *Detective* #225 (Nov) near the end of that wonderful year.

Greatest Comic Book Ever

[continued from page 21]

town of Hilldale—with unique knowledge that will help track down a serial killer. Interestingly, in part of this Feldstein-scripted story, Doc Swanson and the town's Sheriff make their way to an old derelict house, looming dark and foreboding on the crest of a hill. The Doctor proclaims, "We'll find the killer up there, Sheriff—in the old Bates Mansion! I'm sure of it!" Although there's no actual connection, the sequence seems to eerily presage imagery from Hitchcock/Stefano's *Psycho* movie (based upon the 1958 Robert Bloch novel)! Evans's moody and atmospheric artwork is outstanding. A sorely under-rated artist who, to my mind, was actually one of EC's best contributors. His marvelous illustrative style is comparable to that of Crandall's.

This wonderful issue is rounded-off by a standout Graham Ingels story, "Strung Along!" Here, the Master of Horror turns in one of his most memorable art jobs, inspired by an outrageous Feldstein script that somehow managed to escape the watchful eye of Doctor Frederick Wertham (chief opponent of the comic book). The climax (!) of this tale of marionettes that come to life to aid their creator involves an insinuated sexual encounter between a dying man and his recently-deceased wife! Quite remarkable—even for an EC book! In penning this tale, Feldstein drew upon his childhood fascination for marionettes (as a kid, Al had his own puppet theatre).

The World's Greatest Comic Book Ever? Well, *Vault of Horror* #33 certainly rates as perhaps my all-time-favorite horror book. But, then again, I could probably talk about different comic books, representing different genres, with near-equal enthusiasm!

Fifty years after its original publication, and twenty-five years after I first discovered it, I still retain a great deal of fondness for this particular comic book. Every day I look at Craig's terrific cover. For, you see, the original artwork for it hangs upon my wall, lovingly admired!

Book Review

by Michael Kronenberg

MONSTER RALLY

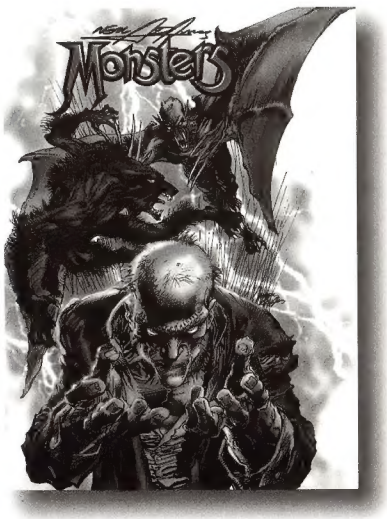
NEAL ADAMS MONSTERS
Deluxe slipcase HC signed by the artist/writer $39.95 ISBN: 1-887591-57-5, 88 pages released JAN '04 from the publisher and Diamond Comic Distributors
Regular HC $24.95 ISBN: 1-887591-56-7, 72 pages, released JAN '04 from the publisher and Diamond Comic Distributors

I've been a horror movie fan all my life. When I was a kid, on Saturday mornings I couldn't wait to wake up, switch on the television and watch *Creature Feature*, which would show all the great Universal and Hammer horror movies. In particular, I loved the Universal films featuring the classic monsters. From 1931-1941, Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney Jr. elevated "The Big Three" (Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster and The Wolf Man) to iconic status. By the mid-forties though, Universal's horror stable was beginning to run out of steam. Studio heads hoped to inject new life into the genre by gathering "The Big Three" into one film. These movies would go on to be affectionately known as "Monster Rally" films, and Universal made three of them *House of Frankenstein, House of Dracula* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Although these are fun films for classic horror buffs, they are all lacking the one thing fans wanted to see most, an all-out battle between "The Big Three."

Fifty-six years later, *Neal Adams Monsters* brings "The Big Three" back, and accomplishes all the things Universal couldn't those many years ago. The bulk of the book is Adams' forty-six-page "Monster Rally" story that he wrote, pencilled and inked. It's a story I'm familiar with, since I read it in an earlier form when it was in *The Art of Neal Adams Volume 2* (1977). The version that Adams and Vanguard Productions has put together is nothing short of spectacular. Adams uses all his great storytelling abilities to present the ultimate monsterfest.

The story begins with an enraged village hungry for blood, pursuing Vincent, the nephew-assistant of the now dead Doctor Frankenstein, and his fiancée Erika. From out of nowhere, Prince Vlad rescues the terrified young couple. But Vlad is in fact, "Dracula," and he has a sinister purpose. If he has an unstoppable creature like Frankenstein's Monster, his safety will be assured during daylight. To get this, Vlad holds Erika for ransom. The monster is created then kills Erika but a werewolf's bite brings her back. The scene is set for a battle of pitiless monsters.

Neal Adams is inarguably the father of modern realistic comic book art. His influence in comics is indelible, and is still being felt in mainstream comics. With *Monsters* we have the opportunity to see how well he can tell a horror story. This is an aspect of Adams art that has been sorely neglected. We've had many reprints and explorations of Adams' superhero work at DC and Marvel, but what's forgotten is his brilliant turns at Warren Publications and his many covers for DC's horror comics of the late-sixties and seventies. Vanguard has done all comic fans a great service by presenting Adams' story in such a luxurious and finely restored version. For me, reading this graphic novel was like watching one of the classic Universal horror movies on DVD. Similar to the DVD restoration done on those movies, the art in the book has been fully restored to its original clarity. Like many of the classic color movies that have had their colors painstakingly restored on DVD, this comic too has had a full color digital restoration. Any classic film on DVD has its director oversee its entire production. Likewise, *Monsters* has Adams supervising the entire project. And no DVD is worth its price without extras and that is one of the things that makes Vanguard's book so special. The standard hardcover edition contains 13 bonus pages. These extras include a fascinating examination of Adams' film collaboration with horror movie director Stuart Gordon. Gordon and Adams became fast friends when Adams redesigned Gordon's science fiction play *Warp* in 1974. Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator* is one of the true modern horror classics and his follow-up film was *From Beyond,* an overlooked and scary film. Gordon enlisted his old friend Neal Adams to help envision the Lovecraftian creatures in the movie. The book shows Adams' sketches and color production drawings for the film. Adams writes an interesting commentary that gives us an in-depth look at his creative thought process. Also featured are Adams' sketches for Tobe Hooper's *Funhouse* and the unmade Universal property *Childhood's End.* What will truly appeal to comic fans are reproductions of the covers Adams did for Marvel's magazine line in the seventies.



Neal Adams Monsters truly is all that we wished Universal had done with their stable of monsters. It's rich, fast moving and thrilling, all the things you would expect from a classic horror film and fills a void left bare by comics today.

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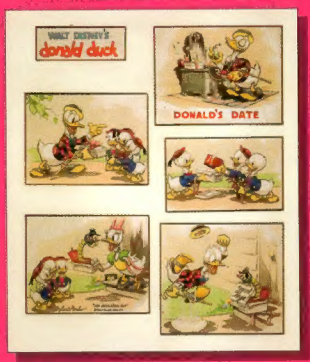

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